

WHEN CREATIVE FUN ACTIVITIES ARE IMPLEMENTED
INTO THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT INCREASES

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ABSTRACT

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The context for this project is, The Kids for Christ Ministry. This research will explore various ways children are influenced, engaged, and transformed with the inclusion of fun with Biblical instruction. The hypothesis of this investigation is that through fun activities, and Christian instruction offered is to the youth of the Church; children will establish an awareness and grow a Godly perspective which will enhance their development spiritually. A quantitative research method will be used with questionnaires and training through activities with the necessary documentation of responses from the test group, and the learning platforms used with creative fun instruction.

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Because a project like this is invariably collaborative, I want to first acknowledge God, whose aid, assistance, and anointing led me each step of the way. I want to acknowledge the valuable feedback and support which I received from Rev. Dr. Robert E. Jones, Dr. Drucella Veasley, Rev. Dr. Harold Hudson, Janice Kronour, Mrs. Marcia Byrd, Rev. Dr. Alfred Thompson, Darice Jackson, and The Kids for Christ Ministry. I want to thank the staff at United Theological Seminary for their support and focused work to make disciples for Christ. I also want to thank the President of United Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Kent Millard for his continued belief in me and steadfast presence.

I am most grateful to my friend and colleague, Rev. Lashounia Sanders for her careful and critical suggestions and especially to my two daughters, Ashley Dillard, and Ivory Giles whose timeless empathy were invaluable. They both encourage and support my clarity of thought and loved me through all my life choices. They are my greatest gifts from God. I also want to acknowledge my two grandsons, Dawan Reynolds and Bryson Mason, who are an extension of God's love and gave me strength to never give up.

Finally, much gratitude to my editor, Dr. Davina Hicks, who understood and appreciated this project and who loved and supported me in this entire process. Thank you for all your prayers, which were brought to fruition.

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my mother, Barbara Marie Banks who loved me unconditionally and encouraged me by example with her acts of agape love for all those she encountered. I miss her and will always appreciate her impact on me. I also dedicate this document to my precious daughters, Ashley M. Dillard, and Ivory G. Giles, whose capacity for compassion and forgiveness have kept me and driven me. Their forgiveness equipped me for God's calling and made space for miracles in my life.

I also dedicate this document to my eight beautiful sisters, Dr. Karen E. Bright, Jenise Banks, Debra Carter, Stephanie R. Banks, Lynda C. Gant, Miriam Banks, Valarie Tram, and Michelle Tram, whose consistent support provided the framework for care and concern that shaped my ministry. Also, to my spiritual family, the members of State Road United Methodist Church, who loved me through the preparation of this document and cheered me on, along with my mentor, Dr. Alfred Thompson.

Finally, I dedicate this document to the creator of the universe, God. Whose anointing, wisdom and love nurtured me and gave me strength to continue when I wanted to give up.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NF	No Excitement or Creative Fun Activities
XF	Excitement and Creative Fun Activities
TG	Test Group
KFC	Kids for Christ
DMin	Doctor of Ministry

Show me how to do like you. Show me how to do it.

—Stevie Wonder, *Do Like You*

INTRODUCTION

This document is based on children's ministry and the implementation of creative, fun activities into the development of youth through Christian education. The Kids for Christ Ministry is held at United Theological Seminary, located at 4501 Denlinger Road, Dayton, Ohio 45426. The Kids for Christ Ministry's vision is to create an atmosphere of fun and excitement, while teaching children how to follow biblical and Godly principles.

The Kids for Christ Ministry will be used as a context to determine if creative, fun activities increase the spiritual development of children. The Kids for Christ Ministry is held every Saturday from twelve noon until two p.m. However, for the purpose of this project The Kids for Christ Ministry will alternate Saturdays. Every other Saturday will have Bible lessons with no creative, fun activities, this environment will be named NF (No Fun).

The alternate Saturdays had creative, fun activities. The exciting, creative, fun activities will be the tool used to inspire and teach the children Godly principles and determine if exciting, creative fun activities increase the spiritual development of children. Again, this environment will be named XF (Excitement and Fun). The Kids for Christ Ministry sometimes meets off campus, places away from United Theological Seminary. Places like the bowling alley, Disney Frozen Ice Skate Show, Vandalia Recreation Center, Englewood YMCA, Campgrounds, The Rave Cinema, Orbit Skate World, The Arc, and many other exciting, fun places.

This dissertation contains several chapters to facilitate the framework needed to support the research process. Chapter one of this document focuses on the context in ministry where the researcher's spiritual autobiography and dissertation connect. Chapter two examines Holy Scripture, with particular emphasis on an Old and New Testament emphasis, intersecting with the focus of this project. The third chapter provides guidance on the historical significance of Christian education in the church. Chapter three explores the life and significance of Robert Raikes with his institution of "Sunday School."

Chapter four of this research investigates the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. This chapter builds on the Biblical and Historical foundations chapters and support the theological view of The Kids for Christ Ministry, used for this research. Chapter five deals with various scientific disciplines where methodology is studied. This chapter contains areas of psychology, education and sociology that have been researched. Therefore, this chapter has been developed from relevant and recent literature not contained in the Biblical, Historical or Theological Foundations chapters. Chapter six of this research reports the project results of the treatment. This last chapter analyzes the results of the surveys taken from the children and the observers.

Ten of the children from The Kids for Christ Ministry will be the participants in this project. All the children participants will be unaware of the project, eliminating the possibility of intentional or unintentional behavior. There will be three observers, Pastor Carolyn Banks, Minister Darice Jackson, and Dr. Drucilla Veasley. The children's watched behavior, along with their response to the survey questions will determine if creative, fun activities have any significance in the children's spiritual development. For

this project, the ten participants will form one group called the Test Group (TG). The project will last ten weeks and will be monitored by all three observers.

The context for this project is, The Kids for Christ Ministry. Preliminary and investigative research will examine with creativity, the spiritual development of children. Children are learning in a society where entertainment of all kinds dominate the culture with new trends and enticing suggestions. The increase of Godless choices seems to produce a constant display of dysfunction through gaming, music, and television options. A great number of our children are consequently bombarded with an unhealthy spiritual diet, in some cases with no Godly influence for balance.

This research will explore various ways children are influenced, engaged, and transformed through intentional efforts with the inclusion of fun with Biblical instruction. The hypothesis of this investigation is that through creative fun activities, and Christian instruction offered is to the youth of the Church; children will establish an awareness and grow toward a Godly perspective which will enhance their development spiritually and intellectually. The project will be fortified with comprehensive research to develop a model for ministry to aid a broad plethora of organizations and individuals in the arena of fun incorporated in the Christian education process.

The projects purpose to disclose a specialization for forward movement in incorporating the proper combinations for the enhancement in teaching techniques with children from a Biblical view, incorporated with fun. A quantitative research method was used; with pre-and post-questions, training through activities with fun and instruction, with the necessary documentation of responses from the test group, and the learning platforms used with fun and instruction.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

This project means a great deal to me, as I have a passion for youth ministry. The context of this focus is especially important because of that fact that most of my experiences with youth ministry started at the church where the treatment will be conducted. My childhood, personal tests and trials have prepared me for the challenges of today, and I am grateful to express my giftedness of teaching in the body of Christ. The synergy of this project connects the lessons of my past with the culture of the present with an alignment of making youth disciples through Christian education.

My life is a testament of God's amazing grace, and because of the tremendous victories that I have been blessed to overcome, I have a passion to help others. On May 29, 1956 God saw fit to allow me the honor of entering His marvelous creation, called the world. I arrived late that afternoon, approximately seventeen months after my mother's first child. Marvelously created and predestined for life's mountains and valleys. God introduced me to my parents and the world that warm day, weighing a little over six pounds. In some brilliant and spectacular way, the earth had transformed and became something different, different than it had ever been in the history of its existence.

The universe had become the reciprocal of another mystery, me! Like a rose that miraculously appears after being planted, the earth had burst open with a new life and I somehow had become a part of God's magnificent design and plan. Never had the world

existed with me as a part of it and God had uniquely and wonderfully made all creation without me until that warm afternoon. Incredible as it was, I became a part of God's creation and I was about to embark on a journey with God and man; a journey that would prove challenging and change my life and the lives of others. I do not remember the first few years of my life; I only know what my mother, family members and grandparents have shared with me about those moments.

My father was born in Middletown, Ohio and he was the only male of five siblings. He grew up in an African American middle-class family and his father (My Grandfather) worked the steel mine until retirement. I remember my grandfather; he was fair skinned, and it always seemed he was about to burst open with joy and excitement whenever he was in the presence of his grandchildren. He would bite our ears or our noses when he saw us, and he would sometimes bite hard enough to make us cry. Never intentionally, he was overjoyed and had no clue how hard he bit us. My dad's mother (My Grandmother) had beautiful long hair that reached her buttock. Her skin was ivory in color and her Native American traits were chiseled to perfection.

I can remember how she held the position of head of the house and how she practiced strict discipline even when it came to my granddad. My grandfather intentionally honored my grandmothers every request; being careful not to upset her. He knew what was coming if he did. According to my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and my mom; my dad was an above average student and an outstanding athlete. He played football, basketball, ran track and even learned to play the clarinet during junior high. After graduation from Middletown High School, where he studied college prep courses;

he obtained an athletic scholarship to attend Central State University, where he met my mother.

Later after our family was complete with children and financially secure, he obtained a master's degree from Antioch University. He was tall and attractive and according to family members women adored him. I later learned he adored women too. My mom had hazel eyes that would change colors according to what she wore, flawless skin and was shaped like a coke bottle. However, her physical beauty could not compare to her inner beauty; she possessed an angelic spirit and was the finest example of unconditional love I have ever known. I did not know it then, but I later found her gift of loving unconditionally was the glue that held me together during the most painful times of my life.

My mom's up-bringing and childhood was not as fortunate as my dad's, in fact she grew up in several foster homes. She never really knew who her father was, but suspicion has it; her mom was raped by her uncle and my mom's uncle was also her dad. My mom had four siblings, two sisters' and two brothers. One of her sisters and her two brothers were separated from her when she entered a cycle of abusive foster homes. According to family members, during those times she spent in foster homes, being physically and sexually abused; she was responsible for cooking, cleaning, farming, ironing, and going to school. I am not certain how or why she ended up in foster homes, I just know how grateful I am that God saw fit to keep my mom and one of her sisters together during those painful times of their lives.

After years of foster homes and abuse, God arranged for my mom and her sister to attend Central State University. That is where my mom and dad met, on the yard of

Central State University. As I mentioned before, my dad was an outstanding athlete and the center of attention at Central State University. He also became the center of attention in my mom's heart. She dedicated her time and heart to academics and my dad. Not only was she an excellent student, but she also took on the responsibility of doing much of my dad's academic works and wrote many of his papers in college while he was busy with sports and extracurricular activities.

While on the yard at Central State University, neither of them had any idea God had planned for them to be together for the remainder of their lives and neither of them had given any thought to God's creation of me or my siblings. After graduation from Central State University my mom became pregnant. However, my dad already had two daughters. At the age of sixteen he impregnated my oldest sister's mom (Stepmom number one), she was fifteen years of age at the time of her pregnancy. At age twenty-four he impregnated my second oldest sister's mom (Stepmom number two). My mom's pregnancy would make child number three for my dad at age twenty-six. My sister was my mother's first child, and I am told the center of attention until my arrival. If you are keeping track, my arrival makes four girls for my dad, and two girls for my mom.

After my birth, fourteen months passed, my mom revisited the hospital to have her third daughter. That made a total of five girls for my dad and three girls for my mom. It was obvious that my dad had no intention of giving up on his pursuit to have a boy. He wanted a boy and was not going to stop trying to have a son until he did. Well, fifteen months later and here comes another arrival! It is another girl! Well, that makes a total of six girls and you would think my dad would have given up trying to have a boy after six girls. We thought so too.

A total of five years passed and there had not been any visits to the hospital or new arrivals at our home. However, our thoughts of my dad finally giving up trying to have a boy was just that, only a thought! Because as soon as we thought he was finished trying to have a boy; you guessed it! Another arrival! Another girl! But there was something different this time; after all we had waited five years instead of the usual fourteen or fifteen months, and my parents had gotten older. It seemed time was running out; surely, he was finished! But with great excitement and expectation we all waited for my mom to arrive home from the hospital, but to our surprise, we had another girl added to the family. My father tried desperately to have a boy, but continued to have little girls, both inside and outside of his marriage to my mother.

I remember how hurt my mom was when she was faced with the reality of another woman having a child by her husband. How could he bring his mistress into her home? I remember the pain it caused me and my sisters. More importantly I remember the pain and suffering it caused my mom. I remember watching her deteriorate emotionally and mentally. It was not long before she physically became ill with lung cancer and died. I believe that was when I began to feel hatred toward my dad. It was not what he had done that hurt most. It was thinking of what it took in his heart to do it. How could my dad do such a horrible thing to my mom who he was supposed to love, cherish, and honor? She represented a vessel of love and did not deserve the pain that destroyed her life.

Pain on the other hand was not new for me; I had gotten used to being treated badly by my dad. Treated differently than my siblings. I remember always trying to figure out why my dad treated me the way he did. All the painful memories of watching him show love to the other sisters, but not me. After years of making every attempt

possible to please my dad, I figured out that whatever the reason was for his abuse, it was not about me. After all, I was a little kid who had done nothing to deserve the verbal or emotional neglect I received.

There were so many examples of verbal and emotional abuse, it would take too much time and space to write them. I can only remark that the difference my dad made in me and my sisters ruined my life temporarily and led me to many bad decisions. My desperate need to have the love of my father and his approval turned into rebellion and hatred. I do not remember if I hated him most for what he did to my mom or hated him more for the way he mistreated me. I only know my life became a cycle of hatred toward my father. The person I thought I needed love from most, I despised and hated with all my being. When I look back, I believe it was easier to hate him than it was to continue in the pain of not being loved by him. So, I thought! The physical and mental abuse my mom suffered and the verbal abuse I faced every day was destroying me little by little.

At some point when I was struggling from the constant hurt and pain in my life, I formed a relationship with God. He was the one I talked to, cried to, and prayed to. He was the only one I believed could rescue me from the pain. Much of my life passed, but with the comfort of a loving God and my years of being on the honor roll, voted homecoming queen, playing on the varsity basketball team, varsity cheer leader, track star, first place speech contest winner, band, choir, and anything I could think of proved to be futile. No matter what accomplishments or achievements I obtained did not matter. I was seeking my dad's approval and love and no matter what I did I was not getting it. Even though my dad did not recognize or acknowledge my gifts, I later learned that all my efforts and gifts were being recognized and groomed for the glory of God.

Somewhere between yearning for my dad's approval and hating him, I began to look for attention and the love I wanted from other places, other people. I began to look for love in all the wrong places and my life began a downward spiral. I did not like guys much during high school because I was an athlete, singer and honor student and the time had come for me to go to college. I decided to go to Wright State University, majoring as a pre-med student. While attending Wright State University, I still lived at home with my parents and decided to date my best friend's brother. He was older than I was and drove a royal blue corvette. The fact that he was cute was also a plus. We began to date and have a lot of fun, but I soon found out he was involved in drugs. Not only did he snort cocaine, but I later found out that he sold drugs too. I am not sure why I did not take off running then, I only know I did not.

I was in the limelight and I had never had a man give me the attention he was giving me. He had all the right moves, and he was giving me what I thought was love and the attention I thought I needed. It was not long before my relationship with God took a back seat to this young man and things began to spiral out of control. My Sundays were no longer being spent at church and my talks with God became less important the more time I spent with this young man. We became so involved with each other, soon we were taking trips out of town and going to concerts and having what I thought was a blast. However, a trip to Tennessee proved to be one of the last trips we would ever take.

On our way home, headed to Dayton, Ohio, we stopped off at one of his friend's house in Lebanon, Ohio. He had not noticed the undercover stakeout that was watching his friend's house and I certainly did not notice. After all, I had no reason to be looking for them or anyone else. As soon as he returned to the car, we headed toward the

highway; only to be surrounded by detectives and police. I had never seen so many officers, sirens, and patrol lights. I did not know he had the drugs in his car, nor did I know he had a concealed weapon; A 357-magnum. Even worse the officers kept calling me officer Smith. I could not figure out why. We were both handcuffed and arrested. When we arrived at the precinct, I discovered the 357-magnum revolver had been stolen from a police officer; the officer's name was Officer Smith. They assumed I was Officer Smith. That was the beginning of a long court battle to prove my innocence and the end of that relationship.

It was back to school at Wright State University and I knew that God had delivered me out of jail and the life of insanity I had chosen, however, the problem, the pain, the deep hurt, and the issues of being unloved and unwanted still haunted me. Of course, the legal trouble I got into made things worse. It was as if I had given my dad the ammunition to verbally abuse me even more. I had given him the proof he needed to validate all he had ever said about me as a failure. I continued to watch my dad show love to all my other sisters and it seemed his voice had gotten louder in my spirit. I continued to listen to him admit his dislike for me. It was not easy!

Some days I thought I could ease the pain by watching movies and my favorite TV programs. However, it seemed as if it never failed, there was always some program on TV that expressed a loving relationship between father and daughter. I remember crying during those moments and even sometimes crying myself asleep. My sisters would often ask my dad why he treated me differently, only to get a confused look from him and no verbal response. It was as if he did not have any idea what they were talking about or

felt his actions were valid. Over time the pain did not ease or lessen, I believe I just got immune to it.

Eventually, I separated from my boyfriend and became a victim of all the worlds' devices and scams. Living in the world, doing what worldly people do and getting what the world gives. Before long I was in legal trouble because of illegal decisions I made. Each decision seemingly right to a person who was being controlled by drugs. One of the consequences of making bad decisions led me straight to jail and there I met with God again. With tears and shame like I had never known, I cried out to God like no other time in my life and the Holy Spirit spoke to me and instructed me to write the judge I would be appearing in front of. I thought it was ridiculous and the likelihood of my letter reaching the judge was impossible. However, I followed the instructions of the Holy Spirit and before long I appeared in front of one of the finest Judges in our judicial system.

After appearing in front of the judge, I knew that God had prearranged our meeting. Not only was the Judge a man of compassion and Godly wisdom, but he also believed in me and ordered me to The Salvation Army for drug treatment. That day I was part of history, the judge did something he had never done in the history of his profession as a judge. He asked me if he could have the honor of stepping down from the bench and addressing me personally. When he came toward me, he leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Keep in touch and let me know how things go!" By this time, my picture had been hanging in the United States Post Office on the most wanted list because I had absconded and was terrified I would be sent to prison. When I look back, I realize that God's divine hand was protecting me even then. When I was taken to the Salvation

Army, I arrived there shackled at my waist and feet. I will never forget how the Holy Spirit revealed to me through those shackles the bondage I was in. God had a plan of deliverance to set me free and I had arrived at the location that would begin my journey of deliverance. Literally physically and spiritual bound, I entered The Salvation Army's Adult Rehabilitation Center. It was there my entire life was changed and it was there that God called me to the ministry.

I will never forget the day God called me to ministry. I just could not understand why He had called me. Surely, I was not worthy to be God's servant! There I was, 3:30 in the morning, listening to God. Not sure if I was dreaming or if I had lost my mind. God spoke again that day, He told me to go to 2 Corinthians and read chapter 6. The words leaped off the page and radiated my entire being. My spirit was overwhelmed by this experience in a way I will never be able to put into words or describe for this spiritual autobiography or any other academic assignment. God had spoken directly to me and not only had He spoken directly to me, but He also used His word to confirm what He had spoken! What could I do? I was physically and spiritually paralyzed. I could not speak, could not move! The Creator of the universe had chosen me to serve. He had chosen me to be set apart. He had called me to the ministry and there was nothing about myself that allowed me to feel worthy enough to be used by such an awesome God! Certainly, He had made a terrible mistake! Not me, I had violated Him in every imaginable way. If God had not made a mistake before now, He had certainly made one this time! So, I did not answer; at least not right away. I remember getting dressed that morning for my work assignments and morning worship. The Holy Spirit would not let go of me. An overwhelming, pressed-down feeling had overtaken my whole being and I knew it was

because I had not said yes to God's request. I could not! I remember thinking, "What can I possibly do for God?" He was supreme, majestic, and holy and I was nothing.

After getting dressed I walked down the stairs, where an awesome meal had been prepared for us that morning before going to our work assignments. There I met God head on. I still was not about to say yes, I did not think I was clean enough. I was not worthy enough. All the horrible decisions that I had made in my life began to bombard me. I was convinced God was playing some horrible joke on me for all the wrong I had done. I was reminded of all the pain I had ever felt, all the hurt I had ever experienced. He reminded me of my deep desire to hear my dad just say, "I love you!" I thought of the emptiness felt all my life and how God had rescued me from death. I thought of God's love and how He had kept me through tears, abandonment, and abuse. I thought of His love and how nothing could compare to any love I had ever experienced.

I had been told so many times by my earthly father I was nothing and would never be anything and somehow along the way I began to believe those deadly words. Words, that had cut through my very existence and torn my soul apart. Those deadly words had replaced any good and positive thoughts I had ever had about myself. My spirit was dead, and I never imagined there was ever any way to bring life back into me again. I knew every horrible decision I ever made was out of pain. I wanted to be loved. I had hurt and disappointed family members, my children and hurt them beyond measure. My life became so tainted with evil, so I asked one of my sisters to please care for my children before I entered The Salvation Army. As crazy and painful as it was, I knew I needed help, but I was still fixated on needing my dad's love.

I became a Salvationist, joined the ministry team, and served God with all my heart and soul. I traveled to New York several times to attend worship meetings that had the attendance of millions of Salvationists from all over the world. I learned, The Salvation Army is a fighting force of equipped officers and soldiers who have dedicated their lives to the destruction of the enemy. Never in my life had I ever seen a group of Christians so serious about spiritual warfare. I served on The Salvation Army's Ministry Team for over ten years and had the blessing of being equipped to fight spiritual battle head on; through prayer, preaching, teaching, serving, and working. I signed articles of war and dedicated my heart to God and my hand to man. Had it not been for God's plan and the privilege to serve as a minister for The Salvation Army I would never be the effective minister I am today.

During the time God allowed me to serve at The Salvation Army, I learned to forgive my dad for all the pain, neglect and abuse and I realized that he had been spiritually attacked as badly as I had. I realized that he had no knowledge that he was being used by the enemy to keep me from God's divine plan. A plan to deliver and set captives free from sin and bondage. I knew that the plan of the enemy was to destroy me, I also knew the enemies plan was to destroy my dad in his attempts to destroy me. I knew that I had to forgive my dad, and I knew I had to be free to deliver the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amazingly, my dad's last days on earth happen while I was in rehab and just before he died, he sent me a card with the words, "Hang in there, love Pops!" I had finally received those precious words I had longed to hear all my life from my dad. His last words to me were the words I wanted so desperately.

God healed me in every way from all the pain I had ever felt with His amazing grace and love and took over my life. I dedicated my life to Him by serving and giving others my testimony of His deliverance and healing through every talent and gift given me. I have my daughter's forgiveness for being absent from their lives, the devoted love of my family, their trust, support and over 30 years clean. I know I will never repay my heavenly Father for all He has done, but one thing is certain, I will live my life as living proof of His might and power each day He blesses me with breath.

I obtained a bachelor's degree from Wilberforce University and after graduating from Wilberforce University; I continued my academic pursuit by attending United Theological Seminary, where I obtained two master's degrees. M.A.C.E and MPth. I also attended the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, GA. I am currently one of the interns for the United Methodist Church, work as Youth Pastor at McKinley UMC and Pastor Kids for Christ Ministry. To God be all the Glory and Praise for all of the wonderful things He has done in my life.

Children are our future, and they should have the attention of the church that commissions the support of both community and nation. Focusing on the success of our children is a faith-filled journey with a promise of legacy, and for the Christian discipleship. Jesus told His followers to permit the children to come close to Him because such is the Kingdom of heaven¹ (unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NIV). It was Jesus who made the declaration to His followers to

¹ Matthew 19:14, NIV.

allow and create a path for the children to get to Him is a sure sign of the Believer's commission to intentionally evangelize the youth of our time.

Looking back on my own childhood experience, I can easily relate to the uncertainties that sometimes cloud the thoughts and beliefs of a child. However, nothing strengthened my faith more, as I journeyed through life than my own personal relationship with God, and the spiritual leaders that took time to lead and guide my path. It was not just what they taught me, it was how they imitated Christ in their lives. They were the proof I needed to believe in a God I could not see. Also, the miraculous moments God showed up in my life with divine intervention, moments that could not be humanly explained, moments that only God could arrange, prepared me to become the leader for The Kids for Christ Ministry. After thirteen years of ministry at The Salvation Army, working with adults and children, working as Youth Pastor at Trinity Tabernacle Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga, and working as an intern for McKinley United Methodist Church in our youth department, I realize how God has prepared me to pastor The Kids for Christ Ministry. So, it is with great joy and determination that I regard The Kids for Christ Ministry, an honor, because making disciples for Jesus Christ from an urban community of children cannot be compared to any other privilege on earth. Especially, when our children exhibit the excitement and energy each Saturday. Nothing can compare to the joy and authentic smiles on their faces that follow when they realize God is present in their lives and can make all things possible for them. God becomes real in an amazing way for our children and watching them grow spiritually is not just a gift for them, but an amazing gift for our team of leaders.

Interestingly, our leaders not only spiritually lead and direct our children but are led by them in a magnificent and amazing way. The Kids for Christ Ministry leaders are often reminded to look through the eyes of our children and remember our children view things through their own lenses. That is why I have chosen to address a basis for my Doctoral project from The Kids for Christ Ministry, relative to making disciples for Jesus Christ from children who come from an urban community. I intend to explore the creative ways children can best form Godly principles and be guided spiritually to form their own personal relationship with God, while examining whether their context has any effect on becoming disciples for Jesus Christ. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”² It is appropriate to say Solomon’s purpose for writing Proverbs was to teach wisdom and discipline, and to help us to understand wise sayings. However, Solomon also warns us to receive instructions in discipline, good conduct and doing what is right, just, and fair throughout the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs not only encourages and instructs but gives knowledge to young people. Pacifically, Proverbs 22:6, instructs us to teach our children the right path, and when they are older, they will not depart from it. What is this right path? I believe Proverbs 22:6 provides specific instructions that imply that we should not simply let children go their own way and do their own thing but instructs us to teach children Godly principles they will not depart from when they are older.

Solomon had a deep sense of the broken nature of the human soul and because we are not only born sinful, but also foolish with a tendency to make wrong choices that bring devastating consequences in our lives, we must be guided, instructed, and

² Proverbs 22 :6, NIV.

disciplined to walk in the ways of God. That discipline, instruction, and guidance according to Solomon should begin when we are children. I agree with the wisdom Solomon shares, and I share his concern for the spiritual discipline of children. Proverbs 22:6 suggests it is our job to go to war against the inborn sin and folly in a child's heart and makes it clear we cannot sit back and let children pick their own way. It goes without saying; we must discipline, guide, and instruct children in the ways of God. I believe God uniquely and divinely positioned me to help children find their spiritual path and I believe the children who live in the urban community of Dayton, Ohio, who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry are those chosen children whom God allows me the honor of ministering to.

This synergy assignment comes at a time in my ministry context that affords me the opportunity to address the seriousness of guiding, instructing and disciplining children to walk in the ways of God, children who come from a broken urban community, with all the characteristics of an urban context. Within the forthcoming pages, my ministry interest and skills will be highlighted in relation to the needs of my context. This assignment will also determine how the relationship between my ministry interests, skills and the needs of my context can form the basis for a Doctor of Ministry project. Further, I will develop a theme statement and hypothesis on which I will build my Doctor of Ministry project.

Serving as the Pastor of The Kids for Christ Ministry, 4501 Denlinger Rd. Dayton, Ohio, is more than a privilege, it is a great honor. Being called to serve the children in our community has also afforded me the opportunity of helping children to develop their faith. Serving as Pastor of Kids for Christ Ministry has been one of the

greatest rewards in my life and I hope has been to the lives of our children. Teaching children Godly principles and being a part of helping to increase the spiritual development of children is more than rewarding, it is a privilege.

We keep our mission statement at the forefront of The Kids for Christ Ministry, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”³ I believe that if children are guided and taught the principles of God, they will navigate through life’s journey successfully. I further believe, without Godly principles children will be led astray and find it difficult to build a solid foundation. That solid foundation and source of life, I believe is God. As Phillis Heusser stated, in her book titled *Children as Partners in the Church*, “Children develop a body of beliefs as they recognize God as the source of life, and Jesus as a person who shows us how to live.”⁴

As the Pastor of The Kids for Christ Ministry, I believe children, even the youngest among us are partners in the total ministry of the church and are a part of a community of faith that enables them to draw upon the biblical and theological foundation for the mutual ministry of the young and old. Though adults have socially and technologically changed the world in which children live and grow, The Kids for Christ Ministry believes the needs of children in urban communities are much the same as children in any community. Children in urban communities still have physical, social-emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs and are dependent upon adults to show them how to meet those needs, no differently than any other community. Adults who work

³ Proverbs 22:6, NIV.

⁴ Heusser, D-B and Phillis. *Children as Partners in the Church* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1985), 59.

with children in urban communities give their time, energy, skills, and often finances for the sake of showing children how to meet these needs, and it is important to remember children observe and imitate those persons of faith, including Jesus, who are important in their lives. Children seek to discover whether their trust in God and in the faith-community has been well placed. Phillis Heusser quoted, “Children question their beliefs, measuring them against the beliefs of others and testing them in the world outside of the church.”⁵

Realizing each community of faith has its own personality, The Kids for Christ Ministry was developed from a modest size of twelve children, ranging from age five to fifteen years of age. These children had come from an urban community with all the characteristics of an urban community; including poverty, declining neighborhoods, crime, pain, suffering, racial conflict, drugs, and people struggling to survive. Our vision for The Kids for Christ Ministry was a big vision, emphasizing biblical principles that encouraged spiritual growth and lead children toward a life of faith. We needed a partnership of persons who would stand against the powers, principalities, and forces that confronted this community of children. Most of all, we needed to trust God and ourselves to do it. Our leadership was determined to create an atmosphere of interdependent relationships between God and each other, while living by example.

We believe our examples are important characteristics of our faith community. Therefore, The Kids for Christ Ministry’s leaders are aware that children follow their example and strive to be worthy imitators of Christ. That often requires that we reflect on

⁵ Heusser, D-B and Phillis. *Children as Partners in the Church* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1985), 54.

our own experiences as children and remember those leaders in our own faith community who made us feel special, welcomed, and accepted by giving us responsibilities, relating to us outside that faith community and being imitators of Christ. Realizing, The Kids for Christ Ministry's primary responsibility is to teach children Godly and biblical principles, we intentionally implement scripture, prayer, songs, and a time of worship in our ministry, because we believe by implementing these traditions, an atmosphere of spiritual growth is created for our children.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Incorporating the techniques taught in the Biblical Foundations core module, using the information found in Biblical Interpretation, *A Road Map* and selecting an Old and New Testament scripture for the Biblical Foundations chapter for the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary was an interesting task. The New Testament scripture selected is Mathew 19:14 and the Old Testament scripture selected is Proverbs 22:6. Both the Old and New Testament scriptures selected have been researched and the following pages will fulfill the exegetical requirement for both Proverbs 22:6, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it,*” and Mathew 19:14, Jesus said, “*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*”

These scriptures were chosen with the aid, assistance and anointing of the Holy Spirit and the mentors of the focus group, Building the Church Without Walls in the 21st Century. The focus group was led by Rev. Dr. Gerald M. Young and Rev. Dr. Alfred Thompson. Unfortunately, Rev. Dr. Gerald Young excepted another work assignment and is no longer a part of our group. In the following pages I will discuss how the study of these two passages is fundamental and foundational to the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary and the project I have selected. I will also meet the

requirements of the United Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program by providing this Biblical Foundation research work.

As a United Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry student, Pastor of The Kids for Christ Ministry, Youth Pastor of McKinley UMC, Pastor of State Road United Methodist Church, and Chaplain at the Veterans Administration Center, I carefully selected Proverbs 22:6 and Mathew 19:14, mindful of the assignment requirements and how these two scriptures would be fundamental to the Doctor of Ministry program. I also considered how these two scriptures related to The Kids for Christ Ministry mission and vision statements. Additionally, the two scriptures selected speak loudly to both the purpose of The Kids for Christ Ministry and the hypothesis created for the Doctor of Ministry project.

The Kids for Christ Ministry desperately and intimately concerns itself with the training up of children and plays a huge part in leading children to Christ. However, the research of these passages defines different meanings of what is implied. First, in Proverbs 22:6, "*In the way he should go,*" it is automatically assumed by most to mean, according to biblical principles. "*Training up a child in the way he should go,*" is a principle that must be carefully examined. The Kids for Christ Ministry's mission and vision appear to line-up with the implied meaning and both scriptures seem to mirror the proclamation and request penned in these passages. However, The Kids for Christ Ministry is also committed to an atmosphere of fun and excitement. Both fun and exciting activities are vital to the children involved in The Kids for Christ Ministry, and statistically the most frequently asked question from parents to their children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry is, "Did you have fun?" The fun factor is not

only the factor most frequently asked about from parents, but other children outside the ministry ask the same question when they are deciding whether to join The Kids for Christ Ministry.

Teaching our children how to follow biblical and Godly principles in their homes, schools, church, and their community is what The Kids for Christ Ministry is dedicated to doing, while having a strong foundation of Godly character and faith. We help the children in our community make better decisions, trust God, and spiritually navigate through life's journey. Proverbs 22:6 is suitable, as it announces the importance of training up children in the way they should go, and equally important is Mathew 19:14, because it proclaims the significance of allowing children to come to Jesus Christ. While Mathew 19:14, warns us not to hinder children from coming to Jesus, it also proclaims the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these little children. Further, the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures selected observe the significance of children.

These two scriptures carefully instruct us to follow God's instructions for children. While Proverbs 22:6 cautions us to train children up properly, Mathew 19:14 warn us not to hinder them from establishing a relationship with Jesus Christ. These two scriptures are fundamental and foundational to my Doctor of Ministry project and the research I provide will explain why. The Kids for Christ Ministry is desperately and intimately concerned with teaching children how to follow Biblical and Godly principles in their homes, schools, church and their community, while having a strong foundation of Godly character and faith to assist them in making better decisions, trust God and spirituality navigate through life's journey. However, we realize that children are beacons of fun and play. Also, these elements are vital to them and help them to develop in all

areas of their lives. Appropriately, Proverbs 22:6 is suitable because it announces the importance of training up children in the way they should go. Equally important is Matthew 19:14 because it proclaims the significance of allowing children to go to Jesus Christ.

Solomon authored most of the book of Proverbs and composed his sayings during his reign from 970-930 B. C. (Prov. 1:1). Solomon highly likely penned chapters one to twenty-nine of Proverbs, Agur wrote chapter thirty and King Lemuel wrote chapter thirty-one.¹ The author tells us in the first chapter the nine sets of reasons why the book was written. He penned it to offer instruction, wisdom and understanding (verse 2). He also recorded the book to help others gain an understanding of judgment and equity (verse 3), to acquire simple prudence (verse 4) and to offer discretion and knowledge to the young (verse 4). In verses 5 and 6 Solomon states he recorded his words to increase the wisdom of somebody already wise, to offer advice on wise counsel, and to give understanding regarding the enigmas and riddles given by those who have attained wisdom. While the book of Proverbs imparts wisdom for Godly living for children and adults, the book of Matthew focuses on Jesus as the Messiah and prepares us, even children, for life eternal. Therefore, I will research Proverbs 22:6 and Mathew 19:14 separately in the upcoming pages, describe, and conclude how the studies and research of these two passages are foundational to the Doctor of Ministry project.

Proverbs 22:6 Exegetical Work

1 Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*. n.d.

The opening words of the book of Proverbs give its current Hebrew title, of which the first word has been adopted by translators and “Proverbs” has become the common heading of the book in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the King James Version.² At one time a title of honor, the book of Wisdom, or the “all-excellent wisdom,” was applied by both Jews and Christians to this book, indicating that the book of Proverbs took its place as the representative of the wisdom of which the Hebrews thought so much. Proverbs root meaning is that of companion;³ however, the book of Proverbs contains many brief proverbs in simple couplet form, unconnected with each other. According to R. L. Roberts, “The most frequently quoted of all proverbs is Proverbs 22:6,”⁴ “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it*” (NKJV). The explanation given for Proverbs 22:6 by *The Soncino Books of the Bible*, edited by A. Cohen: “*Train up*,” from the verb is derived from the Hebrew word for ‘education’ (*chinmuch*).

The intention is not ‘the way of uprightness and good living,’ but ‘for the way in which he is to spend his life.’ Whatever occupation he is later to follow is necessary to prepare him or her for it in his or her early years because that is when habits are formed which influence his or her conduct in adulthood.”⁵ Other commentaries add to this understanding of Proverbs 22:6. *Dr. Constable’s Notes on Proverbs* (2006 edition):

2 Footnotes, Barnes. *Book Notes*. New York: Jamison Fauset and Brown Book Notes, 2018.

3 Footnotes, Barnes. *Book Notes*. New York: Jamison Fauset and Brown Book Notes, 2018.

4 R. L. Roberts. *Setting Limits* (Nashville, TN: Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony/Rodal, 1998), 54.

5 A. Cohen. *Soncino Books of the Bible*. 2003.

‘Train’ (Heb. *hanak*) means to dedicate (cf. Deut. 20:5; 1Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 7:5; Dan. 3:2). ‘Train’ has the idea of narrowing and in this verse, implies channeling the child’s conduct into the way of wisdom. That guidance, this way, might include dedicating him or her to God and preparing the child for future responsibilities and adulthood. “In the way he should go,” is literally ‘according to his way.’ It may mean according to his temperament, personality, responses, or stage in life. On the other hand, it could mean the way in which he ought to go. The Hebrew grammar permits either interpretation. “Way” in Proverbs usually means the path a person takes through life, not one’s personality, disposition, or stage in life. Consequently, the verse is saying the parent should train up a child in the way of wisdom to live in the fear of God. However, the context favors the latter view.

The second part of this verse challenges the faith of many godly parents; obviously, many children who have received good training have repudiated the way of wisdom later in life. The explanation lies in a correct understanding of what a proverb is. “A proverb is a literary device whereby a general truth is brought to bear on a specific situation.”⁶ Many of the proverbs are not absolute guarantees; they express truths that are conditioned by prevailing circumstances. Proverbs 22:6, according to R. L. Roberts remarks, “There is probably no proverb that has been more persistently misapplied.”⁷ The usual application of the verse is that if a child is taught the Bible and given proper religious training, he or she will be faithful during the remaining years of his or her life. However, this rule is contradicted when a child departs, and the assumption is made that

6 Dr. Constable. *Dr. Constables Notes on Proverbs*. 2016.

7 R. L. Roberts. *Setting Limits* (Nashville, TN: Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony/Rodal, 1998), 14.

the child's training was neglected or inadequate. In support of these inadequate claims, Proverbs 22:6 is quoted. Certainly, the value of a child's Biblical training cannot be overlooked; in fact, early Biblical training is accented repeatedly in both the Old and New Covenants. According to G. Campbell Morgan, "there is evidence in the language for an alternate and less superficial view."⁸ Morgan states in his book titled, *Searchlights from the Word*, "The problem involved in applying this adage involves correct apprehension."⁹ Morgan states, "Everything depends upon the real meaning of the words, "*in the way he should go*""¹⁰ The question is what is meant by, the way in which a child should go? A literal rendering of the Hebrew answers this question. The Hebrew translation literally means "*Train up a child according to his way.*"¹¹ The Hebrew for these words is '*al pi darco*. *Darco* is the construct form of *Derek*, way, course or mode, like the Greek *hodos*. These words have a variety of meanings, both literal and figurative. Brown, Driver, and Briggs give the meaning of, "moral action, character and duty,"¹² as the meaning of the words, and cite Proverbs 22:6 as an illustration.

8 G. Campbell Morgan. *Searchlights From the Word* (London, UK: Smith and Goodspeed, 1946), 90.

9 G. Campbell Morgan. *Searchlights From the Word* (London, UK: Smith and Goodspeed, 1946), 90.

10 G. Campbell Morgan. *Searchlights From the Word* (London, UK: Smith and Goodspeed, 1946), 90.

11 G. Campbell Morgan. *Searchlights From the Word* (London, UK: Smith and Goodspeed, 1946), 90.

12 Brown, Driver and Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford. UK: Clarendon, 1907), n.d.

Examples of the figurative use of *derek* by which an action is spoken of as a procedure or course of conduct are numerous. We find it in Genesis 19:31, *ciderek-colhaarets*, after the manner of all the earth, of all mankind. We also find the literal term in Deut. 32:4, the way (manner of acting) of a fool. The other element of the phrase is ‘*al pi*. The first term is a preposition meaning over, in, at, upon. *Pi* is the construct form of the word *peh*, mouth. Therefore, the phrase is literally, “at the mouth.” However, as Gesenius Hebrew shows, it is to be taken in the sense of “according to” or “according as.”¹³ Gesenius Hebrew translation is, “Training up a child according to his way, according to his disposition and habits,”¹⁴ The authors in the *Pulpit Commentary* agree, “The English translations represent a very true and valuable rule that the child is to be trained at the outset in the correct religious and moral path,”¹⁵ but they deny that this is what the writer of Proverbs intended by what he wrote. The authors’ state, “*Darco*, means one of two things, either his or her future calling or station, or his or her character and natural concerns.”¹⁶

According to Taswell, “Both explanations stand on much the same ground.”¹⁷ For Taswell, it seems more natural to take the maxim to be an injunction to consider the child’s nature, faculties, and temperament in the education which is given.

13 Gesenius Hebrew Translation Ibid., p. 837. n.d.

14 William Gesenius. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old T.* n.d.

15 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950) 57.

16 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950), 57.

17 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950), 57.

On the other hand, Delitzsch's says, "*darc*" of itself cannot mean his calling which he or she must enter upon,"¹⁸ as some have claimed it to mean. Delitzsch would translate, "Give to the child the instruction conformable to his way."¹⁹ Delitzsch does not think that this means the way he must keep in during his life, nor of his individual nature. He inclines to the meaning, "of the nature of the child, because *ben derek* is the child's way."²⁰ Training according to the way of a child seems, then, to mean according to the habit, inclination, or nature of a child. This could mean one of two things, the habit or nature of the child as a child, or the habit or nature exhibited by each individual child during his youth. Delitzsch is inclined to the first of these views, "according to his way," because it indicates that the matter and manner of instruction of youth ought to conform to the definite inclination which the child manifests as they show a liking for an honorable and fruitful course and are trained in this way. Such a course will be established which will become a part of their nature so that they will not lose or depart from it. This is certainly in harmony with the literal wording of the passage, yet, the *Amplified Old Testament* expands it, suggesting, "*Train up a child in the way he should go,*" is in keeping with his individual gift and when he is old he will not depart from it."²¹

Additionally, *The Expository English Bible, Benson Commentary*, explains Proverb 22:6 as, "initiate or instruct a child in the way he should go, or according to his way, or in the beginning of his way, that is, in his tender years, as soon as he can receive

18 Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*. n.d.

19 Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*. n.d.

20 Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*. n.d.

21 *Amplified Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2006), n.d.

instruction.”²² *The Expository English Bible, Benson Commentary* signifies, literally, in the mouth of his way, and the mouth being the beginning or entrance of a thing.”²³

Further, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, defines ‘Train’ as initiate, and so educate. Whereas *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* argues that, “Train is to initiate or early instruct,”²⁴ suggesting the ‘way’, literally, ‘his way’ that is selected for him, in which he should go; for early training secures habitual walking in it.”²⁵

Though the traditional translation is understood as, children who have been raised properly are guaranteed to grow up to be godly adults. The previous translation, by contrast, warns parents not to spoil their adolescent children (i.e., the very time when they are starting to demand their own way). “All other English translations parallel this wording closely, so that there is a high degree of consistency in the way it has been translated.”²⁶ But is this what the original says? Does the original really tell us that if we raise our children to be followers of Jesus Christ and believers in God’s Word, they will stay that way all their lives? That is what the proverb is normally translated to mean and seems to promise. If Proverb 22:6 guarantees a godly adulthood for a properly raised child, then it stands to reason that a non-godly adulthood must be the evidence of improper child rearing.

22 Benson Commentary. *The Expository English Bible* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2016), 1148.

23 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950), 92.

24 Jamieson Commentary -Fausset-Brown Bible. n.d.

25 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950), 92.

26 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950), 92.

That might be arguable if the proverb said what the English translations says it is saying. For instance, “*Train up a child in the way he should go,*” the verb “*train*” is translated, *chanak*, which means, first, “to put something into the mouth,” “to give to be tasted,” as nurses give food to infants, which they have masticated to prepare it for their nurslings; to give elementary instruction,” “to imbue,” “to train.” The Hebrew literally is, initiate a child in accordance with his way. Proverbs 22:6 does not occur in most traditions of the Septuagint, though *Theodotion*’s revision does contain it, showing that it was part of the Hebrew text as of the middle of the second century AD. Some scholars explain the absence in the Septuagint by conjecturing that the verse is late and added to the Septuagint of Proverbs as late as New Testament times. During the time that Proverbs 22:6 was written, one obvious status in ancient Israel was royalty, including princes, who received special treatment. There were also other classes of young men (not young women), from the aristocracy who would begin their specialized training in their late adolescence. This is when they would learn of future responsibilities they would have. Most men simply learned the trade of their father.

Unfortunately, interpreting this verse as a spiritual promise from God has led to unnecessary guilt, grief, and self-condemnation. Fathers and mothers have tried to “train up a child” in a godly manner and have had their child choose to leave the faith when he or she became an adult. Further, parents need to understand that their mature children will make their own decisions about whether to obey God or not. Children need to be encouraged to choose God’s way (Abraham’s example in Genesis 18:19); however, children must be free to learn through trial and error and be free to choose a different path; different than the one in which they grew up.

Proverbs 22:6 and Matthew 19:14 are fundamental and foundational to the Doctor of Ministry Program and my Doctor of Ministry project because they clearly suggest that children be directed and led in the right path; a path of godliness, and be allowed to establish a spiritual foundation for life's journey. Further, these two scriptures are appropriate for the context I've chosen for the Doctor of Ministry Program (The Kids for Christ Ministry). Finally, the request penned in Proverbs 22:6 and in Mathew 19:14 replicate and mirror the values, vision and mission of The Kids for Christ Ministry. These two scriptures describe the biblical foundation for my Doctor of Ministry Project and are fundamental to the United Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry program.

Matthew 19:14 Exegetical Work

Matthew has written a Christology without titles, a Christology which at the same time is clearly an ecclesiology. According to John Meier, "It is Jesus the meek and humble of heart who commands childlike humility as the insignia for the church."²⁷ Mathew 19:14, But Jesus said, "*Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come to me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt 19:14, NKJV). This passage was spoken by Jesus, showing humility, and showing that he was not above taking notice of children. Mathew is not just the dogmatic axis of Matthew's gospel; it is also the profound expression of his spirituality. Jesus teaches his disciples to regard the weakest believers, (such were the children in knowledge). Also, the tenderness of His sympathy was kindled into indignation at the rough indifference of the disciples, and Jesus took ill of all who

²⁷ John Meier. *The Vision of Matthew* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 83.

forbid children from coming to Him. In Matthew 19:14, the nexus of Christology and ecclesiology is allowing children to come to Jesus, and it was highly gratifying for Jesus. Jesus earnestly sought that children should be brought to him. It was very improper that any interference should occur.

The second half of the passage, “*Of such is the kingdom of heaven,*” “the kingdom of heaven means here the church,”²⁸ according to ‘Barnes Notes on the Bible.’ See Mathew 3:2. Also Mark and Luke said he immediately added, “*Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein.*” Emblematic of what his followers are to be. Christ did not say that little children were in the kingdom, but to such belongs to the kingdom! The emphasis is on child-like behavior and character. Meier’s New Testament Commentary states, “We are not to understand literal children,”²⁹ for the Messianic kingdom cannot be said to belong to children as such, but men of child-like disposition and character (Matthew 18:3). Jesus cannot consent to see the children turned away from Him. He contemplates in the simplicity and innocence of character those who are to share in His kingdom and how they must be converted and become as little children. Love, simplicity of faith, innocence, and above all, humility, are the ideal characteristics of little children and are the subjects of the kingdom. In this passage Jesus defends the rights of children, telling his disciples to permit the children, and not prohibit them from coming to him, for such is the kingdom of heaven.

According to *Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*, “It is as if the Lord is saying, do not drive away these little children from my person or presence; they are lively

28 Albert Barnes. *Barnes Notes On the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1870), n.d.

29 *The Vision of Matthew* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 44.

emblems of the proper subjects of a Gospel church state, and of such shall enter into the kingdom of heaven”³⁰ *Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible* further points out what converted persons should be, who have a place in Christ’s church and expect to enter into His kingdom and glory above. They are or ought to be like children, harmless, non-offensive, free from malice, meek, modest, and humble, without pride, self-conceit, and ambitious views, and desires of grandeur and superiority.

Pulpit Commentary, argues, Verse 14, “Suffer [the] little children and forbid them not, to come unto me,” Christ speaks as though the children were ready and eager to come to Him if they were not prevented. He thus intimates the truth that though incompetent, children were not incompetent to receive Christ’s blessing. “There was no natural impediment to bar the way,”³¹ according to *Pulpit Commentary*. Further, *Pulpit Commentary* suggests, “Unconscious intents under the Mosaic dispensation were admitted to the privileges of the Jewish Church by the rite of circumcision.”³² In Christ’s kingdom analogous mercies were to be extended to them.”³³ From this passage a cogent argument has been derived for infant baptism. Christ showed that age and immaturity put no obstacle in the way of His blessing, but that children were the standard by which fitness for his kingdom was to be tested. “For such is the kingdom of heaven”³⁴ (NIV).

30 John Gill. *John Gill’s Commentary of the Entire Bible* (New York, NY: OSNOVA, 2012), 382.

31 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman’s Reprint, 1950), 95.

32 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman’s Reprint, 1950), 95.

33 W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman’s Reprint, 1950), 438.

34 (NIV n.d.)

Those who enter Christ's kingdom must be pure, simple, and obedient, as little children. "That is why He says, "of such," not "of these," intimating that it is not the age, but the disposition and character, that he refers."³⁵

Christ showing his regard for children is exceedingly pleasing to adults, but the memory of this condensation makes tender and lasting impressions on the children themselves. The sight that surrounded Mathew 19:14 must have been very edifying and encouraging, especially to other young persons who may have been present. Perhaps, as the disciples expressed dissatisfaction at Jesus' doctrine, Jesus took the opportunity to inform them of the humility, meekness, and docility of children. In other words, "Persons of such character are the true subjects of God's kingdom and heirs of eternal glory, to which Christ's little children are received.

Rev. James Vaughan reminds us, "Trust is a characteristic of a little child and the greatest lesson you have to learn in life, the hardest thing you have to do, is to take God at His word."³⁶ The disciples must have forgotten what Jesus had said about children. Jesus wanted little children to come because he loves them and because they have the kind of attitude needed to approach God. He did not mean that heaven is only for children, but that people need childlike attitudes of trust in God. The receptiveness of little children was a great contrast to the stubbornness of the religious leaders who let their education and sophistication stand in the way of the simple faith needed to believe Jesus.

³⁵ W. J. Dean Taswell and S. T. Taylor. *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman's Reprint, 1950), 438.

³⁶ Rev. James Vaughan. *Of such is the Kingdom: Scofield Reference* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing, 1917), n.d.

Jesus draws a child into his midst and speaking a logion that has been taken from Mk.10:15, “Amen I say to you, unless you turn and become as children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of God.” Thus, judging between those who are free and those who limit their freedom in love, the one who is greater in the kingdom is the one who, like a child, adapts himself or herself to each situation by a new response. “By means of the evangelist’s interpolation of 18:4 Jesus clarifies what he means: “*Therefore, whoever will humble himself as this child, he will be greater in the kingdom of God.*”³⁷ To be great, as Jesus tells his disciples is to be a servant; to be first is to be a slave. “Even as a Human Being (Jesus) came not to be ministered to but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.”³⁸ Matthew records that Jesus added, “*And whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.*”³⁹ That is to say, whoever gives hospitality to a child of the kingdom who restricts his own freedom by serving others, he or she is entertaining Jesus himself!

Mark 9:38-41 is passed over; it has no relevance for this discourse on community conduct and discipline. Instead Matthew moves on to an appropriation of Mark 9:42, which is easily related to the initial question that the disciples raised and especially to the thought of the previous verse, “*But whoever scandalizes one of these little ones who believes in me, it is profitable to him that a millstone were hung around his throat and he*

37 Herman C. Waetjen. *The Origin and Destiny of Humanness* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1976), 28.

38 Herman C. Waetjen. *The Origin and Destiny of Humanness* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1976), 28.

39 Tyndale. *Epistle Dedicated for the Authorized King James Version* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publisher Inc., 2007), 49.

were drowned in the depths of the sea.”⁴⁰ The phrase, “one of these little ones,” denotes the humble disciple who serves and adjusts her or his freedom to the needs of others. In, *The Origin and Destiny of Humanness*, written by Herman C. Waetjen. Waetjen suggests, “Giving offense to such persons has grave consequences,”⁴¹ as Jesus warns in the evangelist’s insertion of Matthew 18:7, “Woe to the world for its temptations to sin, for it is necessary that temptation to sin come; freedom all too easily leads to a new bondage, for there are “the little ones” who freely offer themselves to serve others, and these are those who take advantage of them.”⁴² Jesus warned the disciples about two ways to cause “little ones” to sin; tempting them (Matthew 18:7-9) and neglecting or demeaning them (Matthew 18:10-14).

As leaders we are to help young people, or new believers avoid anything or anyone that could cause them to stumble in their faith and lead them to sin. We must never take lightly the spiritual education and protection of the young in faith. *Matthew’s Advice to a Divided Community*; written by William G, Thompson suggests, “The disruptive insertion implies that the strong negative saying about entrance into the kingdom of heaven is more important than the initial questions, however, in both sayings

40 Tyndale. *Epistle Dedicated for the Authorized King James Version* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publisher Inc., 2007), 50.

41 Herman Waetjen. *The Origin and Destiny of Humanness* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1976), 68.

42 Herman Waetjen. *The Origin and Destiny of Humanness* (Corte Madera, CA: Omega Books, 1976), 68.

the child in their midst is presented as a model for the disciples,”⁴³ Jesus appears as the great advocate of children.

According to John P. Meier “Matthew suppresses the unedifying setting of the question in Mark 9:33-34 and Jesus has to drag the question out of the disciples, who had been arguing on the road about who was the greatest.”⁴⁴ The twelve alone with Jesus are moved (by jealousy?) to raise the question of rank (Mark 18:1), “Who then is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” Jesus’ answer ranges far beyond the initial topic and he uses a concrete parable, he calls a child into the circle of these would-be leaders lusting for first place; and we must not view the child of Mark 8:2 through the eyes of Christian ethics or modern romanticism, because, “In the ancient world, the child was a piece of property not a full person, with no rights, no defense, or means of assuring his or her own security.”⁴⁵

In keeping with the eschatological reversal of all values which Jesus announces in his gospel, the true disciple must undergo a conversion and become such as a child in the presence of God the Father. According to R. C. H. Lenski, “It has been said that without these words of Jesus and the attitude expressed toward children, the Christian Church would have been far different from what it is.”⁴⁶ The disciples freely became what the ancient child was, humble and low. Therefore, they met the conditions for entrance into

43 William G. Thompson. *Matthews Advise to a Divided Community* (Chicago, IL: Rome Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 74.

44 John P. Meier. *The Vision of Matthew* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978), 32.

45 John P. Meier. *The Vision of Matthew* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978), 33.

46 R. C. Lenski. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1943), 91.

the Kingdom. The disciple who humbles himself (*tapeinosei*); according to John P. Meier, imitates what is for Matthew the essential attitude of Jesus, the meek and humble (*tapeinos*) of heart. It is this humility which constitutes true greatness. For Matthew, the union of Christ and his church is a dogmatic truth which generates a moral imperative for all Christians, but especially for the Christian leaders who are in the greatest danger of neglecting the lowly.

The second part of Jesus' discourse turns from the question of greatness in the Kingdom to the question of scandal in the church. It also turns from the image of the child to the clear reality of the "little ones who believe in me," i.e., the simple and lowly members of the church (v. 6). It should be stressed however that this childlike humility is not a high stage of perfection for the few, an extra ideal to be attained if one seeks to be "great" in the Kingdom; it is the essential condition for entrance into the Kingdom. Meier suggest, "the apparently insignificant members of the church are the most significant because they have the highest order of angels guarding them."⁴⁷

The significance of "the little ones" defines the little ones in The Kids for Christ Ministry. We make every intentional attempt to lead our little ones to Christ and not hinder them from going to him with humility and love. The Kids for Christ Ministry is a movement, a part of the Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible and our ministry is motivated by the love of God and the love of children. The Kids for Christ Ministry is dedicated to empowering the next generation to go forth without hesitation for the Kingdom of God, believing by faith, God's Word, and its power! We are dedicated to meeting the spiritual and human needs of children whenever possible in Jesus name,

⁴⁷ John Meier. *The Vision of Matthew* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 100.

without discrimination, while restoring, renewing, and transforming the lives of “little ones” (children), by the power of God and His Word. Implementing creative, fun activities and training each child in the way he or she should go, while never hindering them from coming to Christ. Always creating a strong foundation of Godly character and faith by helping them make better decisions, trust God, and spiritually navigate through life’s journey.

Incorporating the techniques taught in Biblical Foundations core module, using the information found in Biblical Interpretation and selecting Proverbs 22:6 as an Old Testament scripture, and Mathew 19:14 as a New Testament scripture for the Biblical Foundation chapter gives me the fundamental and foundational information required for the research and exegetical work required for the Doctor of Ministry project at United Theological Seminary. After engaging in research and performing the required exegetical work necessary for this Biblical Foundations project, the work presented describes a critical look at each scripture by interpreting the biblical text and defining each passage. Proverbs 22:6 and Matthews 19:14 are also fundamental and foundational in the success of The Kids for Christ Ministry because these two scriptures mirror the purpose, vision, and mission of The Kids for Christ Ministry. The Kids for Christ Ministry vision and mission are for a community of children being trained up in the ways of God, while being encouraged to come to Jesus without hindrance. For these reasons Proverbs 22:6 and Matthews 19:14 have been carefully chosen and researched for the Doctor of Ministry project at United Theological Seminary.

Solomon recorded the book of Proverbs to help others gain an understanding of judgment and equity, to acquire simple prudence, and to offer discretion and knowledge

to the young. Separately, Matthews 19:14 is a description of Christ humility. Christ was not above taking notice of anyone and he taught his disciples to regard the weakest believers, and such were the little children. Christ informed the disciples what ought to be and who to expect to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Lord our God is unknowable by human standards, and yet in a wonderful way, the Lord has made Himself known to the children of men. He began by revealing Himself to Adam at the dawn of time and then He made Himself known to the children of men by revealing His ongoing revelation of Himself to humanity. God has revealed each of His attributes in various ways, and an unveiling of His nature to humankind, which began at creation and culminated with Christ. At creation God spoke the world into being through His powerful Word and in the fullness of time the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He first spoke to man when He walked with him in the cool of the evening; His final revelation to us is articulated through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word (God made flesh). And it is the same God who continues to proclaim He is Lord and teaches our children in The Kids for Christ Ministry. But it is not enough to know about God, but coming to know Him in a close intimate way, trusting His Word and depending on Him as our sole supplier and everlasting Father, who loved the world so much that He sent His only begotten Son to earth to make Himself known to us, through Christ.

God's character never changes for He is the same today, yesterday, and forever. One of The Kids for Christ Ministry prayers is to create an atmosphere that will allow children to trust God, live in purity of heart and gentleness of spirit, so that Jesus is reflected through them and affect those they encounter. God taught the children of Israel in times past and we believe God is teaching children in this present age. The Kids for

Christ Ministry is a reminder of the great work of God's omnipotent strength, divine power, and gracious love. As we continue to teach the children involved in The Kids for Christ Ministry about God, we cherish each child as a special miracle and we aim to create an environment which enables them to experience the joy and wonder we believe God desires for them. Our primary purpose is to provide an all-encompassing atmosphere that supports the awakening and nurturing of our children's spirituality. Bringing them to an awareness of God, spiritual values, spiritual principles, and their place in the world.

Richard Moulton said, "Children make sense of their world as they engage with others and their environment"⁴⁸ Moulton argues, "Devising teaching methods is important, but nurturing the spiritual life of a child is much more about the realities of human relationships than it is about detailed lesson plans."⁴⁹ He further argues, "It is through play-based experiences that children make sense of their world, as they engage with others."⁵⁰ Oliver DeWolf, author of *Guiding Youth in Christian Growth*, agrees, "It is play-based experiences that create a range of opportunities to explore, imagine, investigate and engage, allowing children's spiritual development."⁵¹

J. Bellous & W. Summey state, "Young children and their spiritual and religious development are of central relevance and importance to who they are as well as who they

⁴⁸ Richard Moulton. *Train Up a Child* (New York, NY: The Modern Readers Bible Publisher, 1946), 202.

⁴⁹ Richard Moulton. *Train Up a Child*. (New York, NY: The Modern Readers Bible Publisher, 1946), 202.

⁵⁰ Richard Moulton. *Train Up a Child*. (New York, NY: The Modern Readers Bible Publisher, 1946), 200.

⁵¹ Oliver DeWolf. *Guiding Youth in Christian Growth* (Philadelphia, PA: Judson Press, 1954), 41.

will become,”⁵² agreeing that all children are innately spiritual. And that is what we have found to be true with the children in The Kids for Christ Ministry. Their questions about life and the divine are questions that we find ourselves responding to weekly because our children wonder about their own spirituality and the things they have been taught to believe. Some of the things they have been taught to believe contradict their real-life experiences and they question, engage, and have conversations to understand what they have experienced in real life. We believe our children’s spiritual development is of central relevance and importance to who they are and who they will become, so we work diligently to help them understand through creative, fun activities because that is the language they are most comfortable with.

J. Berryman, author of *Godly Play* quoted, “One of the biggest mistakes teachers and parents can make when it comes to developing a child’s spirituality is to limit the development to a classroom setting.”⁵³ Berryman argues, “Intellectual, social, spiritual and academic growth should extend outside the walls of the classroom if you want to really enhance a child’s desire and ability to develop and learn.”⁵⁴ Fun-based learning is not a new concept, it has been around for a long time. Fun-based learning can be very advantageous for many reasons. According to R. Best, “Using fun as a developing tool not only provides opportunities for deeper learning, it helps motivate children to want to learn.”⁵⁵ R. Best argues, “When a child is actively engaged in creative, fun activities,

52 J. Bellous & W. Summey. *A Child's Concept of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004), 15.

53 J. Berryman. *Godly Play* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1991), 52.

54 J. Berryman. *Godly Play* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1991), 51.

55 Robert Best. *The Whole Child Matters* (Nashville, TN: Life Way Press, 2007), 477.

their mind experiences the pleasure of learning.”⁵⁶ And that is what The Kids for Christ leaders have observed with our children, the pleasure of learning when creative, fun activities are implemented. C. Boyatzis, author of *Children’s Spiritual Development* agrees, “Entertaining children with fun and play provide an added benefit of motivating children to want to engage in the learning process and want to learn.”⁵⁷ C. Boyatzis commented, “Fun-based learning is also an effective motivation for team-based learning.”⁵⁸ According to Richard Lent, “Children typically try harder when fun and play are involved, because fun and play are more engaging, and the competitive aspect of play and fun activities cause children to want to compete and win on behalf of themselves or their team.”⁵⁹ Lentz further states, “Children may strive to perform at a higher level in an effort to earn more points for their team or because they want the opportunity to play.”⁶⁰

Ruth E. Gibson, shared the importance of enthusiasm and commented, “Enthusiasm rubs off, especially when it comes to learning new things.”⁶¹ According to Ruth Gibson, “If a child sees that you are sincerely enthusiastic about learning, they’re likely to become enthusiastic about learning too.”⁶² Therefore we take every opportunity to show our enthusiasm when it comes to helping The Kids for Christ Ministry children

56 Robert Best. *The Whole Child Matters*. (Nashville, TN: Life Way Press, 2007), 477.

57 C. Boyatzis. *Children’s Spiritual Development* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 104.

58 Richard Lentz. *Christian Growth in Family Life* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 2009), 22.

59 Richard Lentz. *Christian Growth in Family Life* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 2009), 22.

60 Richard Lentz. *Christian Growth in Family Life* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 2009), 25.

61 Ruth Gibson. *On Target In Children’s Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1984), 79.

62 Ruth Gibson. *On Target In Children’s Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1984), 79.

develop spiritually. Our enthusiasm, joy, excitement, and fun activities bring to life the spirit of our children and create an atmosphere conducive to their spiritual development.

Further, we recognize and celebrate our children's achievements because we believe our children require constant positive reinforcement to keep them motivated while they continue to develop spiritually, academically, and emotionally. So, we use positive reinforcement as a tool to motivate learning and development, as we celebrate our children's achievements. We focus on strengths and struggles because the strengths are vital to healthy emotional and spiritual development and progress. We also focus on our children's struggles, according to Donald M. Joy, "children's struggles can create distress and lack of desire to learn and develop."⁶³ That is why The Kids for Christ Ministry does not focus on our children's weakness. We use positive reinforcement so that we do not discourage our children. We believe focusing on their strengths whenever possible encourages them to explore the world around them and turns each day into a learning day. Helping each child develop the internal motivation inside of them, encouraging them and nurturing their spiritual development.

Marie McKeown, author of *How to Engage Children and Keep Their Attention* quoted, "Engaging children is easy when you know how, but it can be difficult if you do not have a lot of experience."⁶⁴ It can be intimidating to try to get children to engage in an activity and keep their attention. That is why it is significant and crucial to get children to engage and pay attention by using their most familiar language, fun! Fun is normal for

⁶³ Donald M. Joy. *Why Reach and Teach Children* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 2005), 14.

⁶⁴ Marie McKeown. *How to Engage Children and Keep Their Attention* (New York, NY: Adventure Works Press, 2009), 67.

children and the best thing we can do to help them develop and learn is to relax and have fun. Because if we are having fun, the children are having fun. This may sound obvious but making a lesson fun or creating a fun activity for children can take some work! Adults live in a cynical world where we have forgotten how to play and have fun, but children exist in a state of perpetual wonder. So, we cannot be afraid to simply make a fool of ourselves sometimes, clown around a bit, pull off our mask and show children that we are excited about spending time with them and doing fun activities with them.

According to C. A. Buzzelli,, “There are very few activities that cannot be made fun when you are trying to engage children,”⁶⁵ for instance, Buzzelli insist, “A simple phrase like ‘let’s see how fast we can do this,’ will soon grant you the children’s full attention.”⁶⁶ According to U. Bronfenbrenner, “Play is far more powerful than adults realize, it’s the key to learning.”⁶⁷ Researchers and educators across the world have found that fun and play can help enrich learning and develop key skills such as inquiry, expression, experimentation, teamwork and spiritual and academic development. According to these same researchers, “Fun and play give children a choice about what he or she wants to do, feels fun and enjoyable, evolves spontaneously, is driven by intrinsic

65 C. A. Buzzelli. *Young Children's Moral Understanding* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1992), 44.

66 C. A. Buzzelli. *Young Children's Moral Understanding* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1992), 44.

67 U. Bronfenbrenner. *The Ecology of Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 75.

motivation about what the child wants to do, and creates a risk-free environment where children can experiment and try new ideas.”⁶⁸

R. Best commented in his book, *The Whole Child Matters*, “In meaningful fun and play, children are active participants, instead of passively taking in a lesson, children take on roles alongside their peers and respond to the other children according to the rules of fun and play that they’ve created.”⁶⁹ According to Professor Doris Fromberg, Director of Early Childhood Teacher Education at Hofstra University, “We need to consider that children learn differently, they learn by comparing physical experiences, by interactions with other people and their own feelings.”⁷⁰ Further, children learn an enormous amount through their imaginations. S. Bredekamp and S. Copple quote in their book, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* “Their spirituality is what pulls together the logical, illogical, and creative parts of the brain.” For children, play is often a full body activity that helps them develop skills they will need later in life. M. Bunge suggest, “Fun, creative activities help children develop socially, academically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.”⁷¹ Developments that will help them become the kind of adults who are able to thrive in a range of personal and professional environments later in life. The Kids for Christ Ministry goal is to create a strong foundation that will help our children to develop Godly principles and characters. We encourage and assist

68 U Bronfenbrenner. *The Ecology of Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 75.

69 Robert Best. *The Whole Child Matters* (Nashville, TN: Life Way Press, 2007), 15.

70 Doris Fromberg. *Meaningful Play* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 43..

71 R. White. *Foundation of Christian School Education* (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2003), 88.

our children by helping them to make better decisions, trust God, and teach them how to spiritually navigate through life's journey. When we use a fun-based, play-based environment it encourages children to participate and engage. "Fun and play also give children the opportunity to act out and express themselves,"⁷² according to R. Cole. Additionally, Eugene C. Kreider, author of *Faith Development in Educational Ministry* suggests "Creative, fun activities increase children's ability to see the perspectives of others, increase their social confidence, and increases children's spiritual development."⁷³

Children can grow as a team, experiment, play, have fun and investigate all they can, while developing spiritually. That is why The Kids for Christ Ministry encourages and assist our children with developing spiritually through creative, fun activities. We implement creative fun activities into the Christian curriculum of our children at The Kids for Christ Ministry, and have increased their spiritual development and learning far beyond what we had imagined.

⁷² Robert Cole. *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston, MA: Regal Books, 1990), 55.

⁷³ Eugene Kreider. *Faith Development in Educational Ministry with Children* (St. Paul, MN: Word & World, 1995), 23.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Using the techniques taught in the Historical Foundations core module and the information found in *Doing Church History*, the following pages will explore the historical figure, Robert Raikes and an analysis of this historical figure, along with several biographical sketches and significant moments of his life will be discussed. Some of his efforts, accomplishments, struggles and achievements will be discussed along with how he established the modern Sunday school movement in Gloucester, England in 1780. Also, other claims of Sunday school originators will be discussed.

According to *Church History Timeline*, Robert Raikes knelt beside his father's grave after the funeral and asked himself where he would go now. What would he do with his life? He had always worked beside his father in the printing shop, but now those days were gone. He mopped his teary face with a handkerchief and stood to his feet and left the graveyard. Robert walked toward the printing shop that now belonged to him. He and his father had spent his father's last years there working on the *Gloucester Journal*. Robert Raikes opened the door of the printing shop and slowly walked inside, picked up his father's last copy of the *Gloucester Journal* published that year, in 1757, and said, "I'll make you proud, Father," he said aloud. "With God's help, I'll keep your Gloucester

Journal alive.”¹ As each day passed, Robert worked hard and made the newspaper larger, improved the papers layout and hired new writers. Eventually more and more people began to read the *Gloucester Journal*. On Robert’s days off he would visit the prisoners in Gloucester, there he found the castoffs of society living in the most appalling circumstances.

The prisoners lived in filthy spaces with almost no food. Even children were sometimes imprisoned along with the worst criminals. This moved Robert Raikes, he decided to write about it in the *Gloucester Journal*. Robert knew that the future was grim for these children who had to work all the time with no hope of an education. Even worse, there was no one to teach them the good news of the Gospel or how to live by Godly principles. Robert Raikes feared the children would end up cold, sick, and starving in the prisons. So, an idea came to Robert, he shared it with his friend Reverend Thomas Stock. “Let’s start a Sunday school!” Thomas said, “it’s a great idea! This was the beginning of Sunday school, where Robert Raikes taught reading and writing half of the day and the Bible the other half of the day. It did not take long before Robert Raikes and Rev. Thomas Stock had one hundred children ages six to fourteen attending their Sunday schools. Even though the children were taught only one day a week. They had something to look forward to after working hard every day. Their behavior began to improve, and the policemen of the city said there was not as much crime or violence.

Robert Raikes waited three years to see if his Sunday schools were a success. Then he printed a story about the new Sunday schools. It was not long before four

¹ Britannica Editors of Encyclopaedia. *Robert Raikes and How We Got Sunday School* (Chicago, IL: Britannica, 2000), n.d.

thousand new Sunday schools were started in towns all over England. Robert Raikes even used his printing press to publish reading books, spelling books, Bible study books, and copies of the Scriptures for the Sunday schools. Robert Raikes was able to look at the Sunday schools and comment, “Rev. Thomas, my father died and his father before him died, one day we will grow old and die too, but the world will not die with us, the world marches fourth on the feet of little children!”²

When Robert Raikes opened his first Sunday School in 1780 this set things in motion for the movement of Sunday schools. Although the other schools we have mentioned previously were evangelicals and had a real concern for the souls of children, a far larger group were philanthropists who saw a need in the lives of children whose social conditions were appalling and they sought to do something about it. To be able to appreciate this we must look at what life was like for children during the 18th century and particularly for those who found themselves at the bottom of the social pyramid.

A historian of the times, Nathaniel Kent wrote, “Those who condescend to visit these miserable tenements can testify that neither health nor decency can be preserved in them. The weather frequently penetrates all parts of them, which must occasion illness of various kinds particularly agues – a fever, which frequently visits children. It is shocking that a man, his wife, and half a dozen children lie all in one room together. Great towns are destructive both to morals and health and the great drains in cities and manufacturing towns where they put up with bad accommodation, and an unwholesome confined air, which breeds contagious distempers, debilitates their bodies, and shortens their lives.

² Britannica Editors of Encyclopaedia. *Robert Raikes and How We Got Sunday School* (Chicago, IL: Britannica, 2000), n.d.

Since knowledge of such appalling conditions was common what kind of monarch, what type of government and why a national church professing Christianity remained unmoved by it?³ Not surprisingly, the life expectancy in the 1700's was approximately thirty-six years of age. Those were particularly the poor people and those living in big cities, where life was tough, and circumstances were appalling. The industrial revolution started during the same time, all kinds of factories were opening, coal, iron, steel, and cotton mills. Men, women, and children were sucked into towns and cities looking for work, and the working conditions were terrible. Fifty percent of the children born in London during this time, died before their fifth birthday.

According to Reformed & Evangelical Teaching the Doctrine of Grace, "Robert Raikes father was a prominent citizen and businessman, the owner of the influential Gloucester Journal and Robert's mother, Mary Drew, helped to assure their family lived comfortably."⁴ Robert Raikes was able to attend St. Mary de Crypt grammar school and at the age of fourteen, afterwards he enrolled as a scholar at the College Cathedral School.⁵ Not much is known about Robert Raikes early life except his father was influential and died suddenly in 1757, and as the eldest son he became the proprietor of a large business at the age of twenty-two. Robert Raikes had the responsibility of looking after his aged mother, his five brothers and his one sister. One of his brothers, Thomas went on to become Governor of the bank of England. The Raikes family was related by marriage to William Wilberforce. Robert Raikes married Anne Trigge, they had three

3 Nathaniel Kent et al., "Robert Raikes," *The Sunday-School World* 40, no. 4 (December 1990), n.d.

4 Chris Clark, *The Christian Union* (Madison, WI: J.B. Ford & Company, 2017, 91), 47.

5 Chris Clark, *The Christian Union* (Madison, WI: J.B. Ford & Company, 2017), 48.

sons and seven daughters. The Raikes family was influential in Gloucester and anyone of any importance knew the Raikes family, and was usually entertained by them. In fact, the Whitfield's and the Wesley brothers were regular visitors to the Raikes home, and they were a very influential group.

Because Raikes had inherited his father's printing press and was able, via newspaper to make regular appeals for food, clothing, and small amounts of money to enable the prisoners to buy food in the prisons. He used the newspaper to highlight the plight of those who were in prison due to debts or minor offences. It was through the idea of a Sunday School movement that Raikes formulated his theory concerning the direct connection between ignorance and poverty and vice. This theory dominated Raikes whole thinking and according to Raikes, "It was ignorance that led to idleness and idleness that led to vice. Therefore, according to Raikes, "it was ignorance that was the cause of vice."⁶ So, according to Raikes, "the obvious and logical solution was education, knowledge, and enlightenment would produce the opposite of vice."⁷

According to C. B. Eavey, in his text, *History of Christian Education*, "In 1780, Raikes started his first Sunday school in Mrs. Merideth's kitchen in Sooty Alley, named so because chimney sweeps lived there."⁸ His pupils were from the lowest levels of society and from places of the worst reputation. Some were unwilling to attend his school, so Raikes marched them to school with wood tied to their feet; this prevented them from

6 "Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement," Crich Baptist Church, accessed May 15, 2017, <https://crichbaptist.org/robert-raikes-sunday-school-movement/>.

7 Crich Baptist Church, "Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement," n.d.

8 C. B. Eavey. *An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958), 84.

getting away. Raikes paid Mrs. Merideth to instruct the children and according to Eavey, “the boys were bad, and the girls were worse,”⁹ so he gave up the work after several months and transferred the children to the kitchen of Mrs. King, with Mrs. Mary Critchley as the teacher, because she seemed to be better able to handle the children.

There are other claims of earlier Sunday schools, but a widespread claim that *Christ Church Parish* in Savannah, Georgia was begun by John Wesley in 1737. John Wesley described his work with children as, “nurseries for Christians.” Also, there was Hannah Bell of High Wycombe, England who began religious instruction of children on a Sunday in 1769. She wrote to John Wesley and said, “the children meet twice a week, every Sunday and Monday.”¹⁰ Hannah quoted, “I labor among them, especially desiring to promote the interest of the Church of Christ.”¹¹ However, there is no mention of this school in relation to the origin of the Sunday school. “Dr. Joseph Bellamy is also credited with beginning a Sunday school in Beth, Connecticut in 1740,”¹² this is described by Joel Hauser in *Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut*. Dr. Bellamy was pastor of the church in Bethlehem until the time of his death and was accustomed to meeting with the youth of his congregation on the Sabbath for a recitation from the Bible, accompanied with familiar instructions for the youth suited for their capacity. However, general education begun with Raikes, because Bellamy did not continue his school and had little credit for starting the movement.

9 C. B. Eavey. *An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958), 44.

10 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 69.

11 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 69.

12 Joel Hauser. *Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut* (London: New Haven Publisher, 1939), 31.

Another Sunday school was started by the wife of a pastor in *First Moravian Church* in Philadelphia in 1744. Quoting from church records, John Farris gave the following proof, “Mrs. James Greeming organized a Sunday school of thirty-three children who were gathered from the neighborhood to keep them from running the streets and to receive religious instruction.”¹³ Also, a school was organized on Saturday (the day of rest for the Pennsylvania Dutch) in Ephrata, Pennsylvania in 1739. According to John Farris, “the school was under the direction of the German community, having separated from the Dunkards or German Baptists in 1728.”¹⁴ Also, according to John Farris, Brother Obed was the teacher of the school and gave instructions to the indigent children who were kept from regular school.”¹⁵ These mentioned schools which met on Sunday or Saturday might qualify as Sunday schools; however, five criteria evident in Raikes’ school were missing in these earlier schools. (1) General education. The earlier schools were used primarily for religious indoctrination, whereas Raikes included general education as a cornerstone of the Sunday school movement. Even though direct instruction in general education was dropped early in the development of Sunday schools, many in favor of Christian teaching continued to attend Sunday schools for the broadening effect it had on their lives. (2) Popular acceptance. Raikes Sunday school received popular acceptance, though little acceptance was received by other Christian educators; credit is still given to Raikes for being founder of the movement.

13 John T. Farris. *Old Churches and Meeting Houses in and around Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1926), 84.

14 Farris, *Old Churches and Meeting Houses in and around Philadelphia*, 92.

15 Farris, *Old Churches and Meeting Houses in and around Philadelphia*, 114.

(3) Continuity. The other schools went out of existence, according to the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention, Toronto Canada, June 23-27, 1905; but the movement begun by Raikes continues even to this day. (4) Direct study of the Bible. The Sunday school of Robert Raikes did not use the catechetical method of teaching; rather he used the direct study of the scriptures. (5) Evangelistic. Immediately the Sunday school of Robert Raikes became known for its impact on the moral life of children in the surrounding neighborhoods. However, there is no evidence that classes were conducted as our contemporary child evangelism movement, nor do we read that decisions or professions of faith were recorded in Sunday schools, as in Wesley's and Whitefield's preaching services. However, "there is abundant evidence of transformed lives, which point out the evangelistic results of Sunday schools."¹⁶ These five criteria are found in the Sunday school started by Raikes and continue into the present Sunday school movement. Raikes, therefore, is said to have begun the Sunday school movement.

It is true that men and women like Raikes, across our country are effectively teaching and preaching God's Word and lighting up many lives because of doing so. But they would be the first to tell you that the spiritual training of children was never meant to be relegated to a single hour on Sunday morning. It was meant to be lived out every day before children by loving parents, grandparents, teachers, policemen, firemen, cashiers, etc. "Spiritual training should not be left up to the church,"¹⁷ according to John Trent, Ph.D., author of *Spiritual Growth of Children*. Further studies also show, "seventy

16 Elmer L. Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, February 1971, 71, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1971-2_068.pdf.

17 John Trent. *Spiritual Growth of Children* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publisher, 2000), 324.

percent of young people raised in the church have not embraced the faith as their own by the time they graduate from high school.”¹⁸

George L. Merrill, wrote in his book, *Development of the Sunday School*, giving a personal description of Robert Raikes, and stating, “Raikes had a liberal education, received from his parents.”¹⁹ Merrill described Raikes as, “a fair, well-looking man, about medium height and comfortable stout, buckish and stylish in appearance with his dark blue coat and white fancy waist coat with silver gilt buttons, cambric frills and ruffs, nankeen breeches, white stockings, and buckles on his shoes.”²⁰ Merrill also described Raikes as, “carrying a stick in his hand when he was not occupied with his gold snuff box.”²¹ In addition to this, according to Merrill, “Raikes wore a brown wig with a double row of curls and a three-cornered hat.”²² Also according to Merrill, “Raikes was a man of gay and joyous temperament, an affectionate husband and father, and a transparent character of social instincts.”²³ Merrill continued in his religious view of Raikes by reporting, “Raikes was an evangelical with a leaning toward mysticism, a good businessman, steady, methodical and very tenacious of purpose, kindly and benevolent, not without a touch of vanity.”²⁴

18 Trent, *Spiritual Growth of Children*, 204.

19 Elmer L. Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, February 1971, 77, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1971-2_068.pdf.

20 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 78.

21 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 78.

22 Elmer L. Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, February 1971, 79, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1971-2_068.pdf.

23 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 80.

24 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 82.

McClintock described Raikes as, “a truly devout man, that carried his Christianity into everyday life, not only scrupulous about his church attendance on the Sabbath, but also made it a rule to frequent early morning prayers on weekdays at the Gloucester Cathedral.”²⁵ Raikes motivation for beginning Sunday school is like my own, in regard to The Kids for Christ Ministry. Raikes was particularly interested in children in the community and wanted to teach them Godly principles. He also desired to teach children how to follow biblical principles in their homes, schools, church, and their community. Raikes was also particularly interested in lowly and degraded children. He visited prisons and went through the streets seeking to do good wherever there was a need. In fact, James Strong remarked, “the improvement in prison discipline at the close of the century in England was due largely to Robert Raikes and his newspaper, which he used as an instrument to affect public opinion in favor of the suffering of the lower class.”²⁶

Edwin Rice, in his book, *The Sunday School Movement and the American Sunday School Union*, indicated, “one of Raikes motivations was the reformation of the country, beginning with children.”²⁷ As the Sunday school movement began to grow, Raikes placed the Sunday school under a board or committee. The purpose of this board was to supervise the school and manage it according to the rules prepared by Raikes. Raikes argued, “The beginning Sunday school of paid teachers is a misconception.”²⁸ The

25 John McClintock and James Strong. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1891), VIII v:1, 883.

26 Elmer L. Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, February 1971, 82, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1971-2_068.pdf.

27 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 78.

28 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 77.

employment of paid teachers and gradual supervision by voluntary teachers did not unnaturally give rise to popular misconception. Raikes believed the most important, vital working principle of the Sunday school was from the first voluntarism. Volunteers help to lead members and communities.²⁹ This theory certainly has its substance however, it is my belief that the most vital working principle of any children's ministry begins with the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit.

I am reminded of the directions I received from the Holy Spirit to begin The Kids for Christ Ministry, and I remember that my voluntarism came after God's divine directions. If you believe every good thought is from God, and our ability to think and move is ushered by the Holy Spirit, then is not it possible that the most vital working principle for Raikes was not the first voluntarism, but the Holy Spirit? Raikes stated, "the reason for the transition from paid to voluntary workers seems to have occurred when the school passed from a secular to a religious agency."³⁰ Raikes made a distinction between the paid and voluntary teachers. Raikes stated, "Sunday school may be the instrument under God of awakening spiritual life in children, supplemented by day classes, and they can form the basis of national education."³¹ Raikes' plan seems simple, but some wonder why it was not instigated long before his time.

Until 1779 English law did not permit a person to keep public or private schools, or to act as a tutor if he or she did not subscribe and conform to the Church of England.

²⁹ Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer. *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 44.

³⁰ Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 77.

³¹ Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 77.

According to Elmer L. Towns, “*The Enabling Act of 1779* permitted objectors to teach without subscription; from then on, those who were not members of the Church of England could conduct a school.”³² This made the Sunday school available to the Methodists, Baptists, and other objectors for use as an instrument for religious instruction for children.

The results of the Sunday school movement included the use of Raikes’ newspaper as an instrument to publicize the Sunday school. Raikes first article in, “*The Gloucester Journal*, November 3, 1783 was followed by a letter in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, November 25, 1783.”³³ John Wesley read of this account and was impressed by its possibilities. Wesley wrote about the Sunday school in the *Arminian Magazine*, which he was editor, with the title, *An Account of the Christian Charity Schools*. Later that year Wesley was to preach in Leeds, England. When he arrived, the town was already divided into seven divisions and had 26 schools. Wesley commented, “those inquisitors, whose office it was to spend Sunday afternoon visiting the 20 schools to ascertain who were absent and then seeking the absentees in their homes or in the public streets.”³⁴ A written list of scholars’ names was used for the roll call every Sunday. According to Robert Raikes, “in four years’ time, the roll call increased to 250,000 children.”³⁵

32 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 79.

33 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 80.

34 Elmer L. Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, February 1971, 80, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1971-2_068.pdf.

35 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 80.

On September 7, 1785, *The Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools* in the different Countries of England was established, later known as *The Sunday School Society*. This society was one of the main reasons for the rapid growth of the Sunday school movement. According to Elmer L. Towns, "This Sunday school movement expanded so rapidly, by 1831, when Lord Shaftesbury unveiled a statue to Raikes, it was claimed that in Great Britain approximately 1,250,000 children were attending Sunday school."³⁶

The Sunday schools caught on quickly and were effective because they were simple. They became a diversion for the children, and a means for parents to socially elevate the family. They were often a means of education for adults also; adults who occasionally attended the schools. Children were encouraged to take their lessons and books home to share with their parents. The Sunday school became an important social interaction for children and parents, organized by people who found that children of the working-class required some form of discipline. Sunday and evening schools were established to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and catechism to the poor and the enrollment was decided by visits with parents, nominations from subscribers, and individual student applications. Students were expected to attend school four to five hours per week and that was the only schooling that most children from the working class ever received.

Sunday schools constantly struggled for survival; there was often ecclesiastical pressure to not teach writing on a Sunday and debates were had about whether teaching the lower classes was a good idea. Some contemporary experts argue that small group

36 Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," 81.

church is the best way to capture learning in the church, especially Sunday School.³⁷ The church of England was often unable to support the schools or provide them with adequate space or funding. Consequently, the schools were financed by subscribers, who were encouraged to nominate children for enrollment. These subscribers were the forerunners of school inspectors.

The teachers were paid, and the classes were often held in a person's home or in rented rooms. The Sunday schools became an important space for social interaction for children and parents who were rapidly moving away from small, close-knit, rural communities to large over-populated urban centers. As the schools gained in popularity and effectiveness, the Church of England started to actively provide facilities and finances. However, this also meant a tighter control over their management and curriculum, as appose to letting lay people run the schools.

So, Raikes started a Sunday school for the poor children. Their parents could not pay for the schooling, like people who were better off could, so Raikes paid for the first school himself and recruited others to contribute. He became obsessed with reforming the morals of the poor children and the lower class. Raikes was a printer and published large sheets with the Ten Commandments and other Scripture verses on them, so the children could use them to read and write, while at the same time learn moral principles. These printed sheets were the first Sunday school curriculum for the children.

Once newspapers heard the story of Raikes printed sheets, the idea spread to other cities and according to Keith Drury's local Church Education course at Wesleyan

³⁷ Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer. *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 46.

University, “by 1785 Baptist William Fox organized a nationwide society to promote the Sunday school in Great Britain.”³⁸ The idea quickly caught on and Christians across England started Sunday schools for the poor, “by 1811 there were more than 400,000 children in Sunday schools in England.”³⁹ According to Keith Drury, Only 20 years later (1831), “England had more than a million children enrolled in Sunday school.”⁴⁰

What would it be like if church members were compassionate, like Robert Raikes? What if we cared for the poor and illiterate, and educated them out of our own pockets, like Robert Raikes? Perhaps the old Sunday school movement should become the Sunday school movement of today. Can we reinvent a children’s ministry by returning to its roots? Offering literacy, moral education, and biblical principles to the children in our communities. The Kids for Christ Ministry is a Christian organization that cares to do just that.

Keith Drury quoted, “Until the mid 1960’s the first question parents always asked their children after church was, what did you learn in Sunday school?”⁴¹ However, “in the 1960’s and 1970’s this question changed, parents now ask their children at the door of the classrooms, did you have fun?”⁴² This question has affected the content and direction of

38 Keith Drury's Local Church Education, *Short History of Sunday School* (Indiana Wesleyan University, 2010), "The Idea Spreads," <https://drurywriting.com/keith/sunday.school.history.htm>.

39 Keith Drury's Local Church Education, *Short History of Sunday School*, "The Idea Spreads," n.d.

40 Keith Drury's Local Church Education, *Short History of Sunday School*, "The Idea Spreads," n.d.

41 Keith Drury's Local Church Education, *Short History of Sunday School*, "The Idea Spreads," n.d.

42 Keith Drury's Local Church Education, *Short History of Sunday School*, "The Idea Spreads," n.d.

children's ministry and the direction of Christian education for children. 'Did you have fun,' is the question that is now the most frequent question asked in Sunday Schools. The study of Robert Raikes is essential to my DMin project, because like Raikes, The Kids for Christ Ministry is dedicated to empowering the next generation to go forth, without hesitation for the Kingdom of God, believing by faith, God's Word and its power. Robert Raikes symbolizes the vision that was established for The Kids for Christ Ministry.

A ministry dedicated to creating a strong foundation of Godly character and faith, by helping children in our community make better decisions, trust God, and spiritually navigate through life's journey. The Kids for Christ Ministry is a ministry whose message is based on the Bible, motivated by the love of God and the love of children. As one of the first people to be recorded as the founder of children's Sunday school ministry, Robert Raikes is said to have been dedicated to meeting the spiritual and human needs of children. Much like the leaders involved in The Kids for Christ Ministry, Robert Raikes was involved in restoring, renewing, and transforming the lives of children. Robert Raikes, an English philanthropist, and Anglican layman was renowned for initiating the Sunday school movement. Interestingly, "a statue stands in Victoria Embankment Gardens, London, United Kingdom, and was unveiled by the Earl of Shaftesbury on July 3, 1880."⁴³

According to Keith Drury, the statue marked the centenary of the opening of the first Sunday school by Robert Raikes, and in 1929 replicas of the statue were cast for

⁴³ Phillip Ward-Jackson. *Public Sculpture of Historic Westminster: Volume 1*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 321-323.

erection and the following year in Gloucester and Toronto the 150th anniversary of the opening of the first Sunday school was celebrated in recognition of Robert Raikes.⁴⁴ The statue was erected under the direction of the *Sunday School Union* from contributions from teachers and scholars of Sunday schools in Great Britain. However, though Robert Raikes was a pioneer of the Sunday school movement, according to Elmer Towns, “he did not start the first Sunday School,”⁴⁵ some already existed, such as that founded by Hannah Ball in High Wycombe which is the first documented known case. However, Raikes is credited for beginning the first Sunday school and children’s ministry. Raikes was not only involved in children’s ministry but began with a school for boys in the slums. Raikes was also involved with those who were incarcerated and saw school as the best intervention for those who were incarcerated. Brilliantly, the textbook he used was the Bible. There were disputes about having schools for those who were incarcerated, however, “Raikes held school for those who were incarcerated and called the school, *Raikes Ragged School*.”⁴⁶ Concerns that desecration of the Sabbath and Christians being employed on the Sabbath were of concern. Bishop Samuel Horsley was one of the ones who opposed Sunday schools being held on Sundays, on the grounds that they might become subservient to purposes of political propagandism. Interestingly, “Sabbatarian

44 Keith Drury's Local Church Education, *Short History of Sunday School* (Indiana Wesleyan University, 2010), "The Idea Spreads," <https://drurywriting.com/keith/sunday.school.history.htm>.

45 Elmer L. Towns, "A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, February 1971, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1971-2_068.pdf.

46 Geoff Dickinson, "The Early Sunday Schools of Gloucester," *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1907/808, December 31, 2018, <https://myprimitive.methodists.org.uk/content/subjects-2/education-subjects-2/Sunday-schools/early-Sunday-schools-gloucester>.

disputes in the 1790's led many Sunday schools to discontinue their teachings"⁴⁷ Yet, "by 1831, Sunday schools in Great Britain were teaching 1,250,000 children, twenty-five percent of their population."⁴⁸

Robert Raikes was part of an effect that changed the direction and content of children ministry and should be given the accommodation due him for his role as forerunner of children's ministry. As the noted founder of children's Sunday schools, Robert Raikes is fundamental in the study of children's ministry and foundational to this DMin project. Research, examination, and the implementation of creative, fun activities, and whether creative, fun activities are essential in the spiritual development of children cannot be examined without discussing Robert Raikes. Robert Raikes is essential, appropriate, and necessary in the study of the spiritual development of children, because Robert Raikes is noted as the founder of the first Sunday school.

Robert Raikes prevented children; boys and girls from becoming a part of impoverished backgrounds and a life of poverty. He represented an invaluable source of education at a time when state school systems had not come into play. His valued role in educating children spiritually and biblically is a vital accomplishment. Also, it is the role and value present within The Kids for Christ Ministry. The Kids for Christ Ministry imitates Robert Raikes passion for children and mirrors his teaching of biblical principles, while making every attempt to be accountable to the standards of God. Robert

⁴⁷ Elmer Towns. *10 Sunday Schools That Dared to Change* (Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1993), 62.

⁴⁸ Carolyn Heighway. *Gloucester: A History and Guide* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1985), 841.

Raikes believed creative, fun activities are essential to the spiritual development of children, and so does The Kids for Christ Ministry.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Using the techniques taught in the Theological Foundations core module, as well as information found in the required book, *Introduction to Theology*, I have completed an analysis and investigation of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. This chapter builds on the Biblical and Historical foundations chapters and support the theological view of The Kids for Christ Ministry, used for this research. Based on the investigation, research and results found, a summary of the concepts, conclusions and information collected have been examined and found relevant to the theme and hypothesis defined in the DMin project.

The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of human beings. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One, Triune God for their origin, motive, and object. By faith, we believe in God and believe all that he has revealed to us. By hope, we desire, and with steadfast trust we await from God eternal life and the graces to merit it. By charity, we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for

love of God. Charity, the form of all the virtues, “binds everything together in perfect harmony.”¹

While giving instructions and important advice to the believers at Corinth, because of their many and varied disorders, Paul reminds the believers of the high value and necessity of faith, hope and love, the last of these being the most significant. For now, we see in a mirror indirectly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greater of these is love.² (1 Cor. 13:12-13).

Paul concludes that love, “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things: (v.7). Paul assures us of the permanence and superiority of love (vv. 8-13). These are the great permanent Christian graces. Love is indeed superior to faith and hope. The Bible states that love is greater than both faith and hope. We could not live our lives without faith or hope, because without faith we cannot know the God of love, without hope, we would not endure in our faith. But despite the importance of faith and hope, love is even more crucial. Why is love the greatest? Because without love, the Bible teaches there can be no redemption.

In Scripture we learn that God is love, (1 John 4:8) and that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. Jesus did not want to go through the pain of the cross, but the love Jesus has for the Father defines His allegiance. He cried in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; yet He obeyed the Father in his duty to save the entire human race. A supreme act of sacrificial love. Love is what motivated God the Father to send His only

¹ Colossians 3:14, n.d., NIV.

² 1 Corinthians 13:12-13, n.d., NIV.

Son to die for us. Scripture proclaims, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Thus, love is the virtue upon which all Christian faith and hope stand. For the believer, love is the foundation for every good thing in our lives. Without love, nothing else matters. Also, in viewing the many emphasis of faith throughout the Scriptures, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, one thing is certain, faith is a basic and necessary quality of the believer.

True faith is more than just an emotional feeling or even a belief. Rinita Weems reminds us, “True faith is a whole-soul commitment to God.”³ Further, the psalmist builds upon the virtue of hope with a series of refrains in the psalms. The psalmist expresses a strong longing for God, as well as a fond remembrance of his own past ministry for the Lord (Psalms 42:1-4). This longing defines the psalmist’s lament as he deplores his present condition, (vv.6-10) even though he is certain that God is available to him. He builds upon the virtue of hope. Faith, hope, and charity are essential and the foundation of Christian moral activity.

These virtues are the basis by which The Kids for Christ Ministry has developed their vision and mission to reach community children and help them develop spiritually. The Biblical Foundations chapter is based on Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.”⁴ However, when do we begin to train up a child in the way they should go? From diapers to diplomas, there is one

³ Rinita Weems. *Listening for God* (NY: Schuster, 2000), 94.

⁴ Proverbs 22:6, n.d., NIV.

overarching issue that confronts the spiritual development and growth of our children, it is boring! It is not fun!

The theory I have chosen to examine in my project is the implementation of creative, fun activities and whether creative, fun activities are essential to the spiritual development of children. As stated in my précis assignment, engaging in creative, fun activities, while training and teaching children about Jesus Christ and God's character requires an intentional commitment, along with intentional creative, fun activities. Additionally, passing on a heritage of faith, hope and charity is an incredible privilege. A privilege God gives to us that should not be taken for granted.

The Kids for Christ Ministry does not take this privilege for granted, because developing children's Christian values and virtues require leading them to a loving, personal relationship with God. We know that Christ is Love, and we make every attempt to model His kindness, forgiveness, and inclusionary grace. We regard each child as a creation of God's and we treat each child with unconditional love, the love of Christ. The Kids for Christ Ministry uses fun-filled, hope-filled, faith-filled, and charity-filled activities to assist in the spiritual development of children. We believe implementing these three virtues help to encourage and empower the spiritual development of children.

The spiritual development of children is essential, and the virtues of faith, hope and charity are significant when children are being spiritually developed. Additionally, in Matthew 19:14, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."⁵ These two biblical scriptures intertwine with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity because theological

⁵ Rev Daniel E. Pilarezyk. *NKJV*. American Bible Society, 1991.

virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. Sue Velek suggest, “These three virtues are infused by God into the souls of children and make them capable of acting as his children and meriting eternal life”⁶

These three theological virtues; faith, hope and charity are significant because by faith, we believe in God and believe in all that he has revealed to us. By hope, we desire, and with steadfast trust we await from God, eternal life, and the grace to merit it. By charity, we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for love of God. Charity binds everything together in perfect harmony. Again, love is the foundation for every good thing in our lives and without love, the spiritual development of children would not be possible.

Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us. By faith we freely commit our entire self to God. For this reason, believers seek to know and do God’s will. “The righteous shall live by faith.”⁷ But “faith without works is dead.”⁸ When faith is deprived of hope and charity, faith is dead. These theological virtues are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. The supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity are given to us with sanctifying grace, reminding us that these virtues come from God and are meant to help us live for God. These supernatural virtues are given directly from God without our having to work for them.

⁶ Sue Velek. *My Worship Book* (Inver Grove Heights: Logos Art, 1990), 74.

⁷ Habakkuk 2:4, NIV.

⁸ Sue Velek. *My Worship Book* (Inver Grove Heights, MN: Logos Art, 1990), 45.

Based on the hypothesis that creative, fun is essential to the spiritual development of children, the question arises whether faith, hope and charity are necessary assurances vital to children's spiritual development. One of the things we need most is faith.

According to Charles Allen, "Some people feel that faith is silly and put it in the same category as fairies, something beautiful but unreal."⁹ Actually, faith is the most practical, down-to-earth thing we possess, and we all possess it. "Without faith we could not live a day,"¹⁰ according to Charles L. Allen. For example, I got up this morning and turned on the light switch, I had faith that the electricity would come through. I turned on the water faucet and took a drink of water, I had faith that the city authorities had made it fit for me to drink, so I did not analyze it myself. I deposit my money in the bank because I have faith to be able to withdraw it. John Westerhoof suggest, "Without faith we could not live."¹¹ It is this same faith that allows the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry to believe in God.

Faith, hope, and charity have a vital connection. They provide for the believer a confident hope, which not only gives assurance of a heavenly future, but which enables the believer to live a godly life here and now. There is no doubt that each of these virtues, faith, hope, and charity have great value. In fact the Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:6 that, "without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God, must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (NKJV)

⁹ Charles L. Allen. *Faith, Hope, and Love* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 48.

¹⁰ Richard E. Lentz. *Christian Growth in Family Life* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1959), 73.

¹¹ Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright. *The Big Little School* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1971), 64.

The value of faith cannot be disputed. Without it, there would be no Christianity. Without faith, we could not come to Christ or walk in obedience to him. Faith is what motivates us to move forward even when the odds are against us. Faith may be a common term in ordinary language, but Christians regard faith as a theological virtue that takes on a special definition. E. M. Standing reminds us, “Christian faith is the virtue by which the intellect is perfected by supernatural light.”¹² By this definition, faith is not at all contrary to reason or intellect but is the natural result of an intellect that is influenced by the supernatural truth given to us by God.

The author of Hebrews reminds us, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”¹³ Without faith life is unlivable. Therefore, we teach The Kids for Christ Ministry children to build a great character, you must first build a great faith. The definition of faith that we find in Hebrews is, “Faith is the evidence of things not seen.”¹⁴ So, we understand what the author of Hebrews meant when he said of Moses, “He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”¹⁵ We hope with faith because life is full of miracles for those who hope and have faith. One of the greatest men who ever walked the earth was Abraham. In explaining his greatness, Saint Paul said “Abraham, who against hope believed in hope.”¹⁶

¹² E. M. Standing, *The Child in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 55.

¹³ Hebrews 11:6, NIV.

¹⁴ Hebrews 11:1, NIV.

¹⁵ Hebrews 11:27, NIV.

¹⁶ Romans 4:18, NIV.

C. Stonehouse remarked, “Faith and hope determine our destiny and measure our willingness to press forward despite barriers and obstacles that surely come, because that’s life.”¹⁷ We must never forget that faith and hope are intertwined with love. Love refuses to be insulted. Faith, hope, and love are the theological virtues we must teach our children, and we do with the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry. Without these three virtues it is impossible for children to develop spiritually. These attributes of love bear all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails. Love is the one thing that will last, no matter what happens. Take love out of the human heart and you have taken away every possibility to bless, every possible capacity to hope and have faith.

The word love occurs six hundred and eighty-six times in the New International Version of the Bible, four hundred and twenty-five times in the Old Testament, and two hundred and sixty-one times in the New Testament. Hope occurs one hundred and eighty times in the Bible, and faith occurs two hundred and forty-seven times in the Bible. It is evident that faith, hope, and love are important instructions to all believers and obviously important instructions from God. All three virtues are important, vital, and necessary for the success of all believers. It is faith, hope and love that have brought all believers to a glorious salvation and into an eternal living union with Jesus Christ, one that may be described as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Further, as united with Christ, believers have a sure hope of a glorious future, an eternal destiny with Christ. Not only

¹⁷ C. Stonehouse. *Nurturing a Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 42.

do believers have an eternal destiny with Christ, but believers have the privilege of serving Christ in their earthly walk. Oberlexz N. Taylor assures us, “Faith, hope, and love encourage all believers to understand the hope to which they have been called, the spiritual power that is available to them now, and the spiritual riches that await them in glory.”¹⁸

We must begin to understand what the important theological virtues are for our children and be able to view things from their lenses, their eyes. It is vital that we begin to communicate on their level. This way our teaching will be more effective and certainly more relevant. D. Elkind reminds us, “We must not only endeavor to work with the need of our children to learn biblical principles and spiritual virtues, but we must also address the need for them to have fun while they are learning and spiritually developing.”¹⁹ In addition, we must seek to achieve a balance between fun and serious intent, remembering their lenses are different than our own.

The Kids for Christ Ministry serves as an introduction platform, introducing Jesus Christ to a community of children, we believe God has chosen to be ministered to and helped to spiritually develop. The Kids for Christ Ministry engages children in the spiritual virtues of faith, hope and love, without putting them to sleep, or turning them off, by using fun, creative activities as a primary tool, so that children will not feel intimidated, pressured or bored while learning. Like it or not, the realization is that we spiritually influence the lives of future generations in ways we cannot even imagine,

¹⁸ Oberlexz N. Taylor. *Principles and Perceptions Regarding the Importance of Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 98.

¹⁹ D. Elkind. *The Child's Reality* (Hillsdale, MI: Erbaum Press, 1978), 204.

because there is one overarching issue that confronts every adult Christian, the spiritual development of our children. Robert Coles explains, “A child is shaped at the very start of life by the values of adults.”²⁰ So, we cannot expect our children to rise to our level; we must meet them on their level. When Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me” (Mark 10:14), He stopped doing what he was doing to communicate truth to the children on their level.

The Kids for Christ Ministry is involved in helping children develop spiritually, and we know we will face obstacles; however, all those hurdles can be cleared only one way, with faith, hope, and charity. We must remain in personal relationship with our children. N. W. Carlstrom reminds us, “Jesus was not on the outside, He stood on the inside, and so must we.”²¹ We must stand in personal relationship to each child we minister to; always remembering that this unique person, who is a child, has a potential for developing spiritually with virtues of faith, hope, and charity. As virtues, faith, hope, and charity have long been celebrated. Some Christian denominations consider these to be three theological virtues, each representing values that define humankind’s relationship with God himself. In fact, faith, hope, and love are discussed individually at several points in the Scriptures.

In the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul mention the three virtues together and then goes on to identify love as the most important of the three: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”²² This key

²⁰ Robert Coles. *The Moral Intelligence of Children* (New York: Random House, 1997), 52.

²¹ N. W. Carlstrom. *Does God Know How to Tie Shoes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 26.

²² 1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV.

verse is part of a longer discourse sent by Paul to the Corinthians. Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians aimed to instruct and correct young believers in Corinth who were struggling with issues of disunity, immorality, and immaturity. This verse extols the supremacy of love over all other virtues. However, without faith, life is a difficult journey, without faith our children will not be sure of themselves, without faith it is difficult to make decision, without faith our Kids for Christ Ministry children will be afraid to dare, to dream, to adventure. Because without faith, we take on a what's-the-use attitude.

There are many definitions of faith, but essentially it means to continue to believe no matter what happens. That is what The Kids for Christ Ministry intentionally teaches our children. Continue to believe, no matter what! One of the greatest statements Saint Paul made was this one: "I have kept the faith." Life dealt harshly with him, but through it all, he held fast to certain convictions. Paul was faithful to his highest principles, faith, hope and charity. Faith means, "God created this world, God cares, and God is working with us and not just watching us from afar."²³ The other part of faith, according to R. R. Marett, is, "When we face up to life on life's terms, we know that we are unable to conquer life in our own strength, we must depend on a higher help, God."²⁴ The Kids for Christ Ministry is intentional about teaching our children perfect love. Saint John says, "Perfect love cast out fear." Therefore, all destructive emotions are conquered by love, faith, and hope. Faith causes us to believe, hope keeps us looking upward and love keeps us looking forward.²⁵

²³ Lewis Richard Farnell. *Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion* (New York, NY: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), 58.

²⁴ R. R. Marett. *Faith, Hope and Charity* (New York, NY: Benjamin Bloom Inc., 1972), 23.

²⁵ Henry Bars. *Faith, Hope and Charity* (New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 51.

Faith, hope, and love are gifts in the present age, and they will still be gifts in the age to come. The NLT translates the promise this way: “Three things will last forever, faith, hope and love.” It is easy to see how love will last forever, since love is an essential part of God’s nature (1 John 4:16). But what about faith and hope? Those two gifts will likewise last forever. Faith in the Son of God will not cease in the eternal state; we will not stop trusting Jesus just because our faith has become sight. If anything, our trust in Him will grow greater. Similarly, our hope will not cease just because our blessed hope has come. Our lives will continue in the eternal state, as will our expectation of other things in an infinite sequence of adventure. Alexander MacLaren explained, “The future presents itself to us as the continual communication of an inexhaustible God to our progressively capacious and capable spirits.”²⁶

Benjamin Bloom suggest, “It is necessary, if there is to be faith in the Christian sense of the word, divine faith, that God give the power to believe and provide the truth that we are to believe in.”²⁷ Some consider this a double gift. Faith, Hope and Charity are the theological virtues that represent the foundation of Christian moral activity; the theological virtues that animate the Christian foundation and give it character. They are “indeed the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.”²⁸ The practices of all virtues are inspired by charity, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love and raises it to the supernatural

²⁶Alexander MacLaren. *The Love of God* (Chicago, IL: Adventure Works Press, 2002), 102.

²⁷ Benjamin Bloom. *Faith, Hope and Charity* (New York, NY: Blom Inc., 1972), 43.

²⁸ John Lederach. *The Moral Imagination* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 58.

perfection of divine love. Love nurtures The Kids for Christ Ministry children and make it possible for us to minister to the children in a supernatural way.

Development theories focus on the importance of social experiences in shaping a child's psychological growth, as mentioned in my Interdisciplinary Foundations chapter. However, these three theological virtues focus on shaping and developing our children spiritually. There are many different child development theories that have emerged to explain how children learn and grow over the course of childhood. Some of these theories attempt to be all-encompassing and explain many different aspects of the human experience, but none of these developmental theories are as significant as the virtues of faith, hope and charity. Faith, hope, and charity are the three gifts that will be ours throughout all eternity. And agape love is the ultimate gift. God in His goodness gives us the privilege of possessing these three gifts and sharing them with the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry.

Charles Allen states in his book, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, "Charity binds all the virtues together with its fruits."²⁹ He further insist, "The fruits of charity are, "joy, peace, and mercy."³⁰ Charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence that fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous. Charles Allen further suggest, "It is friendship and communion."³¹ Because love is itself the fulfillment of all our works, "For God so loved the world that He gave."³² Love is a process of giving. Love demands

¹⁶⁶ Charles L. Allen *Faith, Hope, and Love* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 88.

³⁰ Allen *Faith, Hope, and Love*, 88.

³¹ Allen *Faith, Hope, and Love*, 89.

³² John 3:16, NIV.

expression, Charles Allen quoted, “If love is not expressed, it becomes a poison for one’s own soul.”³³ In order for us to have love in our lives, we must express love for others.

The Kids for Christ Ministry expresses love for our children in several ways. We begin by loving God, ourselves and extending that love to our children.

We do not limit our love to just The Kids for Christ Ministry children, we express love to our community, our family, our church family, and others as well. Because love is an action that must be demonstrated. We believe perfect love gives without thought of return. We believe love has nothing to lose. We believe that love has already given all that it has and has nothing to fear, that love cast out all fear. We also believe love is the character of God; the explanation of the laws that control the world in which we live, and the foundation upon which every successful life must be built and spiritually developed. That is why the Bible warns us that even though we might have marvelous gifts, graces, talents, and wealth, if we do not have love, we are nothing. Even if a person gives his or her life in service, there is no profit in such a life, unless that life possesses love.³⁴ Love, and love alone, determine our worth. Love is the most important thing in life.

Barry Ulanov quoted, “Faith, hope and charity, represent an absolute necessity for miraculous effects, which generate spiritual development in the lives of children.”³⁵

Faith, hope and charity empower the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry to become all that God purpose them to become. We are humbled and honored

³³ Nicholas Hope. *German and Scandinavian Protestantism* (Oxford, OH: Clarendon Press, 1995), 9.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV.

³⁵ Barry Ulanov. *Faith, Hope and Love in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 12.

to be a part of God's plan for the lives of the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry, and we vigorously and insistently focus on the virtues of faith, hope and love, knowing that our children's lives will spring forth in a positive and unique way if they carry these spiritual virtues with them throughout their lives.

The value of hope keeps us moving forward. The Kids for Christ Ministry cannot imagine how our children's lives would be without hope. Because hope fuels us to face impossible challenges. Hope is the exception that we will obtain what we desire. Hope is a special gift given from God through his grace to combat the day-to-day monotony and the most difficult circumstances. Hope is there for our single moms who do not know how they are going to feed their children or keep a roof over their heads. Those moms might give up, if it were not for the hope that a breakthrough is right around the corner. Hope is the invisible hand that holds up the head of a desperate prisoner of war so that he or she can see the light of day. Hope hangs on to the promise of a Savior who is coming to set him or her free.

There is frequent mention of these three virtues during The Kids for Christ Ministry time spent together, and we are expressly charged with the responsibility of witnessing to our children each time we meet on Saturday afternoons from 12pm-2pm. We believe and teach what Louis Arand defines as hope, "Hope, as the object of something unseen, the demonstration of things not seen, and hope cannot exist without love."³⁶ Also, we remind ourselves as leaders of The Kids for Christ Ministry and as

³⁶ Louis A. Arand, S. S., S. T. D. *St Augustine Faith, Hope and Charity* (Westminster, CA: The Newman Bookshop, 1947), 45.

disciples of Jesus Christ that there is no love without hope, no hope without love, and neither hope or love without faith.

In our brief years of service, we have been able to minister to The Kids for Christ Ministry children and see the evidence of our faith, hope and love illuminate in several different ways. An atmosphere of fun, creative activities, and excitement, while teaching biblical and Godly principles, has created a strong foundation for the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry. An example of one of the creative, fun activities we shared with our children; to teach them the importance of putting themselves in another person's shoes; teaching them the importance of empathy, was to have the children exchange shoes with each other. During this fun activity they were able to see how difficult it can sometimes be when in another person's shoes. This activity taught our children empathy.

This is only one example of the many exercises we share with The Kids for Christ Ministry children. We continue to help community children develop spiritually as they navigate through life's journey by teaching them the importance of putting these three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity into practice in their daily lives. Henry Bars stated, "These three virtues are the fruit of practice."³⁷ John Westerhoff insist, "in fact the act precedes the virtue; it is the repetition of the act which produces the virtue."³⁸

³⁷ Henry Bars. *Faith, Hope and Charity* (New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 35.

³⁸ John Westerhoff. *Bringing up Children in the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1980), 57.

“Spirituality has traditionally been framed in terms of religion, and so the issue of church and state comes up,”³⁹ observes Don Ratcliff, Ph.D., education professor at Biola University in La Mirada, CA, and the author of several books on children’s spiritual development. In his research area a lot of secular universities have stayed away from children’s spiritual development because they think the topic is too close to religion. “Some are concerned about objectivity,”⁴⁰ according to Ratcliff. Ratcliff’s own research and experience as a parent however have led him to believe that many children actively search for spiritual understanding at a young age. He recalls his own son, at age five, becoming deeply reflective while watching a campfire during a family trip. Gazing into the flames, the young child observed, the fire is like Jesus on the cross, and the stones are like people standing around looking up at the cross. Ratcliff is reminded that even children can think abstractly. Many experts think the opposite, some believe young children’s early expressions of faith can only be rooted in the concrete experience of seeing, hearing, and touching.

As we strive to survive in a world of pandemic and chaos, a world that is sick, pained, confused, and bewildered, I believe this is the hour for the church to speak out. This is the hour for the church to speak out and show for the love and grace of God. This is the hour for the old to hear from children and Christ speaking through them, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ By His character, God is love, and to know Him is to extend His love to those around us. The Kids for Christ Ministry is our way of extending the

³⁹ Don Ratcliff. *Children's Spiritual Development* (La Mirada, CA: Adventure Works Press, 2002), 79.

⁴⁰ Don Ratcliff. *Children's Spiritual Development* (La Mirada, CA: Adventure Works Press, 2002), 80.

love of Christ to children and helping them to know Christ. Loving others goes far beyond just being a good person because true love still operates when we do not feel like it. The grace we have been given provides the strength we need to pass it on to our children. Children's questions about spiritual matters need to be treated with utmost respect, whether their question is "Does God talk to you?" or "Why do we have to go to church?"

It is exciting to share this journey of faith with The Kids for Christ Ministry children. We are called to walk with them and help them to spiritually develop as they are making changes in their family lives, school lives, and church lives. From a historical perspective things and children are always changing. Knowing this, we can gain nothing by constructing in our imaginations the perfect plan, perfect child, or the perfect Christian family in terms of outward characteristics, because there are many possible healthy styles of Christian relationships. Our job is to work with what God has given us to work with and glorify Him in the process.

The Kids for Christ Ministry children have developed a repertoire of visual and non-visual clichés that they seek to put into order and understand. That is why we meet them on their level when communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and all other spiritual principles. Because it is only by speaking and understanding their point of view that we are better able to communicate effectively and see what direction we can go to help them develop spiritually. Meanwhile the children live a life pleasing to God, which includes a holy life, loving relationships with others, and living an active life, honorable, respectable before all of mankind. In all this, The Kids for Christ Ministry children develop a whole-soul commitment to God.

Conditions that foster spiritual development in children according to Thompson & Randall, in their book titled, *A Standard of Living Adequate for Children's Spiritual Development* quotes, "There must be respect for the ways that spiritual reflection changes with age and growth in thinking, judgment, and personality."⁴¹ Often, we need to remind ourselves and our children that with all their competence and power, adults are not always as spiritually developed as some children. After all, "it's not the chronological age that matters most in spiritual development, but the spiritual age, the spiritual maturity."⁴² With this in mind, the truth is, some children are more spiritually mature than adults.

Our children come from different spiritual backgrounds and certainly are on different spiritual levels. Therefore, there are times, by the process of memory, we must become like children, an experience that recreates hope for our children and allows us to implement creative, fun activities. In the context of The Kids for Christ Ministry the fun-factor is defined as, the cause of enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure that contributes to the spiritual development of children. It becomes important how we set the stage.

According to Iris V. Cully, who states, "Creative fun is essential in the spiritual development of children, because one of the greatest needs of our times is an understanding and appreciation of children and their way of thinking and doing things."⁴³ Children have roles that are meaningful to them, roles that are recognized and respected by adults within the community. Additionally, Robert Clark reminds us, "Respect for

⁴¹ J. Thompson & T. Randall. *Religious Development in Childhood* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1991), 87.

⁴² A. B. Andrews & N. Kaufman. *Implementing the U. N. convention on the Rights of the Child* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1999), 46.

⁴³ A. M. Fairweather. *Nature and Grace* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1962), 112.

individuality in a child's spiritual development means that pathways for growth of faith are individualized based on life experience, individual personality, and how children interpret their own spirituality."⁴⁴ He further reminds us, "Human support during periods of difficulty or crises, personal despair, or transition during which familiar beliefs may be tested or reconsidered is necessary."⁴⁵

According to W. H. Backhouse, "In considering the specific areas of church ministry, the first area that should be considered is children's ministry,"⁴⁶ According to John H. Westerhoff, "Not only is it a radical act for the church to consider children first, but it's mandatory for the future of the church."⁴⁷ Without children the church cannot and will not survive. Who will be the next generation of church leaders? This is the question we must ask ourselves because our children lay the foundation for future relationships with God and the church. If you ask a preschooler, 'What is God?' you get an answer, "God is a person,"⁴⁸ according to Helen Cohen, director of the Frances Jacobson Early Childhood Center at Temple Israel in Boston. When asking one of our children involved in The Kids for Christ Ministry who God is, her response was, "I do not believe in God." I asked her why? She responded, "I cannot see God or hear God, so I know there is no

⁴⁴ Robert Clark. *Supervising Children's Ministries* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 99.

⁴⁵ Robert Clark. *Supervising Children's Ministries* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 47.

⁴⁶ W. H. Backhouse. *Religion and Adolescent Character* (London, UK: Lutterworth Press, 1997), 62.

⁴⁷ John H. Westerhoff. *Bringing up Children in the Christian Faith* (Minnneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1970), 32.

⁴⁸ Helen Cohen. *God is a Person* (Boston, MA: Boston Press, 2000), 251.

God.” Other children are more openly engaged by the concept of a higher power, says David Elkind, Ph.D., professor of child study at Tufts University.

According to Delia Harvelson, “Today’s children begin the road to adulthood very early and we have become conscious of the importance of developing their physical skills and academic skills, “but we do not put the same emphasis on preparing or developing our children spiritually.”⁴⁹ This is a serious problem because all things are manifested from spiritual things. All our children’s abilities are a response to what is happening in the spiritual realm. All children’s magnificent gifts and talents are given by a spiritual God who created them, sustains them, guides them, and leads them. Shepherding their knowledge of the unknown with the mediation of Christ, while ordering their steps to interpret and see an invisible God who created all signs directing them to Him.

Nicholas Wolterstorff quoted, “Part of what identifies the Christian church as a distinct people in history is that it engages in children’s ministry.”⁵⁰ There are other approaches that one could take, and each of those could develop at length. But whatever approach one takes, what comes through is a preferential option for the children, because, “God’s love for the little ones of the world and God’s command that they be cared for and honored takes preference,”⁵¹ because they are a part of the weak defenseless ones; the ones at the bottom, the excluded ones, the miscast, the outcasts, the outsiders who are

⁴⁹ Delia Halverson. *How Do Our Children Grow* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 78.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Wolterstorff. *Hearing the Call* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 13.

⁵¹ Wolterstorff. *Hearing the Call*, 15.

the moral significance of God.⁵² Faith, hope, and charity represent God's moral character, these theological virtues define who and what He is. The Kids for Christ Ministry embrace these virtues and we believe the practice of all these virtues is animated and inspired by love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Further, The Kids for Christ Ministry embraces the exaltation of God in the face of life's difficulties, giving prescriptions for the Godly life and defining the importance of faith, hope and charity every chance we get. We are careful to define the importance of obedience and trust in God; and the need to study and learn from God's Word. We believe, children are our greatest asset; therefore, The Kids for Christ Ministry always acknowledge our children as the future of the Church. For this reason, The Kids for Christ Ministry is dedicated to spiritually developing children in different, fun, and creative ways, always using the spiritual virtues of faith, hope and charity as our foundation.

This analysis and investigation of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, build on the Biblical and Historical Foundations chapters and support the theological view of the context (The Kids for Christ Ministry). Additionally, these virtues are essential and critical when implementing creative, fun activities for the spiritual development of children. Because without these three virtues, spiritual development would not be possible for our children.

⁵² Wolterstorff. *Hearing the Call*, 16.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

This previous chapter the virtues of faith, hope, and charity were discussed, and information was provided that examined the relevancy of these three virtues in the spiritual development of children. In this chapter, using the techniques taught in the Theological Foundations core module, and the information found in *Introduction to Theology*, written by Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra, an analysis and investigation of the theological theme, creative, fun activities are essential in the spiritual development of children is presented. The fun-factor is defined as “a pleasant, enjoyable element or cause that contributes to a result of happiness and joy,” and this chapter builds on the Biblical and Historical foundation chapters to construct a theological and theoretical view of The Kids for Christ Ministry context, as it relates to creative, fun activities and how creative, fun activities are essential in the spiritual development of children.

There is a gap between teacher’s world (being part of the pre-digital generation), and the universe of students, created in the digital age. The two groups-trainers and trainees-are so different in their approach, outlook, style and needs that they can hardly communicate. And the result is a disaster. Game-based learning represents one of the first effective means of making the learning process more interesting for this game generations, as it combines fun and play with the learning process, playing an important role in the internalization of considered ‘heavy’ contents, relaxing, and motivating the student. Learning requires effort and energy, this is a fact, but when there is fun this process becomes lighter and

more motivating. Relaxation enables a learner to take things in more easily, and motivation enables them to put forth effort without resentment.¹

Thompson and Randall say that spiritual development, “concerns the broad search for transcendental meaning that may be as simple as a young child’s inquiries into how the world came into being, or as complex as a theologian’s metaphysical analysis.”² Also, a summary of the information and concepts found have been presented, based on the investigation and research found. After an examination of the theory, contemporary theories relevant to the theme and hypothesis have been defined in this chapter. I will conclude and prove that creative, fun activities are essential in spiritually educating and developing children. Young children are literal thinkers. Just because God is an abstract concept does not mean children are ever too young to begin learning about faith and God. Kindness and sharing are also abstract concepts that children cannot see, but they learn about them from seeing others act in a kind way, or by sharing toys. Similarly, children can learn about faith and God from seeing people pray or connect good deeds to their religious beliefs. Creative, fun activities increase the spiritual development of children, and I have examined assumptions, disciplines, biases, and generalizations which have been made about the topic of children’s spiritual development to prove this theory. I propose, creative, fun activities increase children’s spiritual development, and my research will prove this theory.

J. W, Fowler suggest, “There is no necessary or inevitable process of spiritual growth as is found in the maturational phases of physical emotional, or cognitive

¹ Aliane Krassmann. *Handbook of Research on Immersive Digital Games in Educational Environments* (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2018), 69.

² J. Thompson & T. Randall. *Religious Development in Childhood* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1991), 58.

development.”³ Fowler suggest that spiritual growth is tied to reflective thought and concerns about questions such as, what is the meaning of life? Fowler further suggest, “Spiritual development is connected to children’s efforts to understand the meaning and causes of life experiences.”⁴ This chapter contains areas of psychology, education and sociology that have been researched. Therefore, this chapter has been developed from relevant and recent literature not contained in the Biblical, Historical or Theological Foundations chapters.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.”⁵ However, when do we begin to train up a child in the way they should go? From diapers to diplomas there is one overarching issue that confronts the spiritual training, development, and growth of children, it is boring! It is not fun! The theory I have chosen to examine is, “When creative, fun activities are implemented into the Christian education of children, their spiritual development increases.”⁶ How essential is creative, fun activities in the spiritual development of children? As stated previously, engaging the fun-factor, along with creative, fun activities, while spiritually growing, training, developing, and teaching children about Jesus Christ, and the character of God requires an intentional commitment along with intentional fun. What greater gift can you give your child or children than one that lasts for eternity? Passing on a heritage of faith to children is an incredible privilege that God gives to us. The Kids for Christ Ministry does

³ J. W. Fowler. *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1981), 109.

⁴ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 110.

⁵ Proverbs 22:6, NIV.

⁶ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 111.

not take this privilege for granted. Developing a child's Christian values and leading them to a loving, personal relationship with God, while using creative, fun-filled, faith-filled activities is significant in the spiritual development of children. Further, implementing the fun-factor and creative fun activities help to encourage, empower, and enlighten the spiritual growth of children, while helping them to bring the Bible into their everyday personal lives. The spiritual development of children is essential, and creative, fun activities are the essential ingredient in their spiritual growth.

In Antoinette Becker's book, *Children Ask about God and Everything*, a young child asked her mother: *Did Jesus play and have fun?* The mother answered with a resounding "yes!" Though Jesus was different at the age of twelve, a Jewish boy who had to obey the Law of Moses, go to confession, go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice and fast, Jesus had fun; fun that was full of expectation and laughter. As a baby in his crib, Jesus laughed with his mother and father. Jesus laughed when he played with his friends in his neighborhood. Jesus was a child just like any other child when it came to having fun, but he was at the same time the Son of God. When Jesus was twelve, he was obliged to go to the temple just like all the other twelve-year-old children. He must have looked forward to being with his friends. How happy he must have been knowing he would not only learn but have fun learning. God the Father must have been pleased to let a young girl come into the world whose soul was clean and transparent. This young girl became the mother of Jesus at the age of fifteen, and she was very happy about the arrival of her

child. Mary played with her child the same way we play with our children. Did they have fun? Of course, they had fun.⁷

We must begin to understand what the important spiritual issues are for our children and be able to view things from their lenses, their eyes, and not our own. It is significant and of great urgency that we begin to communicate on their level, imagining walking in their shoes. This way our teaching will be more effective and certainly more relevant. We must not only endeavor to work with the need of our children to learn biblical principles, but the need for them to have fun while they are learning. We must also seek to achieve a balance between fun and serious intent, remembering without creative, fun activities our intent will not be as effective as it would be with creative, fun activities. The fun-factor is not only relevant, but essential. Effective spiritual development requires being intentional and having activities inclusive with creative fun. In the forthcoming pages I will identify, examine, and discuss the resources and discipline relevant to the issue of how essential creative, fun activities are in the spiritual development of children. I will also describe how this theoretical study is foundational to the DMin project.

Someday all children will meet their Creator, shouldn't they be introduced? That is why The Kids for Christ Ministry serves as an introduction platform for the introduction of Jesus Christ to children. The Kids for Christ Ministry engages children in spiritual issues without putting them to sleep or turning them off. We use the fun-factor as a primary tool, so that our children will not feel intimidated, pressured, or bored while

⁷ Antionette Becker. *Children Ask God About Everything: A Book for Mothers and Teachers* (New York, NY: Herder & Herder, 1966), 22.

learning spiritual principles. It has been our experience that the fun-factor, creative, fun activities provide a safety net for children as they launch into uncharted waters. Because the life preserver, the safety net for children is the fun-factor. As biblical and theological content is passed on to children, the fun-factor helps in their spiritual development. Like it or not, the realization is that we spiritually influence the lives of future generations in ways we cannot even imagine. As J. Carr suggest, “There is one overarching issue that confronts every adult Christian, the spiritual growth of our children.”⁸

Robert Cole suggest, “A child is shaped at the very start of life by the values of adults.”⁹ C. Lawton reminds us, “Even before a child is born, his or her parents are already giving expression in a way that will matter for the rest of their child’s life.”¹⁰ In the same way, we find a pattern of adaptability in the New Testament as the Apostle Paul writes a powerful revelation of how development and growth is guided through modeling.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews, to those under the law I became like one under the law, (though I myself am not under the law) to win those under the law, to those not having the law I became like one not having the law, (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) to win those not having the law, to the weak I became weak, to win the weak, I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”¹¹

⁸ J. Carr. *Equipping Children for Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 64.

⁹ Robert Coles. *The Moral Intelligence of Children* (New York, NY: Random House, 1997), 60.

¹⁰ C. Lawton. *What Should Adults Offer Children* (Winchester, VA: Internnal Press, 2003), 7.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 9:20-22, NIV.

Paul adapted his approach for each audience. The message remained the same, but Paul would adapt to his audience, understanding their needs and viewpoints. Then he would alter his presentation accordingly. This is the principle we must use when it comes to the spiritual development of children. We cannot expect our children to rise to our level, we must meet them on their level. When Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me,”¹² He stopped doing what he was doing to communicate truth to children on their level. He took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. Jesus changed what he was doing to be effective with the little children.

If we find it difficult to find time to spiritually train our children, we must remember, the modern equivalent of Israel fruitlessly marching in circles for 40 years must be the way today’s culture plays catch-up, because our lack of time is not a twenty first century phenomenon. We must take the time to spiritually train, develop and help our children. The Kids for Christ Ministry is involved in helping children to spiritually develop, and we know we will face obstacles of one kind or another, however, all those hurdles can be cleared only one way, by trusting God and helping children to develop on their level, through their eyes, with creative, fun activities.

Biblical scholars, studying texts and newly discovered manuscripts, are enriching our knowledge of what the Bible really says. They tell us about the oral traditions that came even before the oldest manuscripts, exploring the place of myth in the communication of religious faith. Theologians, interpreting basic Christian beliefs urge us to see the Bible as the word of God’s self-disclosure, reminding us that the church is a living fellowship of those called by God in Christ.

¹² Mark 10: 14, NIV.

M. Bunge insist, “The methods that are used to convey the Christian faith to children rest on psychological, Biblical, and theological foundations, along with teaching children on their level.”¹³ But when these areas are rethought, our methods of training need to be redirected. Children must be seen personally, looked at directly as their own unique personhood. Since the church is the fellowship of those redeemed by God and the Bible assures us that He knows his own by name, the church must mirror these facts in every action. How useless it is for us to devote hours of preparation so that we may tell beautiful stories, lead a meaningful worship service, plan the activity, work significantly with children, but leave creative, fun activities out. The very tool that equips our children to learn. On the contrary, we must minister to our children in the name of Christ, who called the children to himself, with fun, joy, laughter, and adventure. We must remain in special, personal relationship with our children. Jesus was not on the outside of the circle of fun and excitement. He was and is standing inside the circle of fun with our children. And we must also stand on the inside. We must stand in personal relationship to each child we minister to. Always remembering these unique persons, who are children have a potential for spiritually growing and developing, if we simply, like Christ, like Paul, become childlike and be on their level. That will mean having some fun with them.

Children are created by God. This is a statement that may be implicit but is seldom explicit. Myrtle Arnold quoted, “In most books on the psychology of childhood, it must be spelled out because the understanding of this basic truth affects the connection made between psychological insights and the good news in which Christians nurture

¹³ Myrtle Arnold and James Arnold. *Children In The Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 17.

children within the life of the church.”¹⁴ Therefore, this chapter will briefly identify Child Development Theories as a non-church related discipline, while also defining the reason it will function and impact this project.

Psychologist and other theorists have proposed several different theories centered on how children develop psychologically and spiritually. Some of these theories are known as, “grand theories and attempt to explain almost every aspect of how people change and grow over the course of childhood.”¹⁵ Some of the greatest minds in the history of psychology contributed a few of the best-known developmental theories. Throughout psychology history however, several different child development theories have come up to explain the changes that take place during the early part of life. Kendra Cherry wrote:

Psychologists and development researchers have proposed a number of different theories to describe and explain the process and stages that children go through as they develop, some focus on the developmental achievement or specific achievements that children reach by a certain age.¹⁶

Others focus on specific aspects of child development such as personality, cognition, and moral and spiritual growth. Throughout psychology history, a few different child development theories have emerged to explain the changes that take place during the early part of life. Kendra Cherry further states, “In the modern study of child

¹⁴ Myrtle Arnold and James Arnold. *Children In The Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 18.

¹⁵ Kendra Cherry. *Explore Child Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2018), 44.

¹⁶ Kendra Cherry. *Explore Child Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2018), 52.

development, we take for granted the fact that children are fundamentally different than adults.”¹⁷

In fact, for much of human history, kids were smaller versions of their adult counterparts. It has only been recently that the field of developmental psychology has helped us to understand that “the way children think is very different from how adults think.”¹⁸ Because of the work of some pioneering psychologists and other researchers, there is now a deeper understanding of how kids grow. The following are some of the key theories of child development, as defined in *Explore Psychology, Psychoanalytic Child Development Theories*. “Psychoanalytic Child Development Theories are the psychoanalytic theories of child development that tend to focus on things such as the unconscious and forming the ego.”¹⁹ Also stated in *Explore Psychology*, “the two primary psychoanalytic theories of development are Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychosexual development and Erik Erikson psychosocial theory of development.”²⁰ *Freud’s Psychosexual Child Development Theory*, “is the theories proposed by Sigmund Freud that stressed the importance of childhood events and experiences, but almost exclusively focused on mental disorders rather than normal functioning.”²¹

According to Freud, “child development is described as a series of psychosexual stages; stages involved in satisfying libidinal desire and can later play a role in adult

¹⁷ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 53.

¹⁸ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 54.

¹⁹ Abend M. Sander. *Psychoanalysis and Faith* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012), 107.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud. *Explore Psychology* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012), 39.

²¹ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 85.

personality.”²² If a child does not successfully complete a stage, Freud suggest, “that he or she would develop a fixation that would later influence adult personality and behavior.”²³ Freud believed that children progress through a series of psychosexual stages. During each stage, the libido’s energy becomes centered on an area of the body. The stages of Freud’s child development theory are, “the oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital stages.”²⁴ During each stage, the pleasure-seeking energies of the id drive for satisfaction based on an erogenous zone.

During the oral stage, for example, a child derives pleasure from activities that involve the mouth such as sucking or chewing. Failure to resolve these conflicts can result in a fixation at some point in development. *Erikson’s Psychosocial Child Development Theory* was influenced by Freud’s work, but his own child development theories focused on the importance of social experiences in shaping a child’s psychological growth. Erikson’s psychosocial development lays out a series of stages that people go through, but unlike Freud’s theory, Erickson’s theory covers development for the entire life span from birth until death. Freud believed development was complete by age 5. Erikson believed, “that people continue to develop and grow well into old age.”²⁵ Erikson’s theory begins at birth, as children start out in the trust versus mistrust stage. During this early stage of life, it is important for children to receive consistent care so that they can learn to trust the people in the world around them. Development continues

²² Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 86.

²³ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 89.

²⁴ Erik Erickson. *Erickson’s Psychosocial Development Theory* (New York, NY: Haworth Press, 2012), 88.

²⁵ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 89.

as children grow, and at each stage they face new conflicts and new skills that serve them well throughout life.

Behavioral Child Development Theories center on how children learn through their interactions with the environment. The behaviorist believes that learning and development are a result of association rewards and punishments. According to behaviorist John B. Watson, “any behavior can be learned.”²⁶ Other theorists including Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner also contributed to behaviorism, agreeing with this school of thought, which became a dominating force in psychology. However, theorists Jean Piaget suggested, “that children think differently than adults and proposed a stage theory of cognitive development.”²⁷ According to his theory, children can be thought of as “little scientists” who actively construct their knowledge and understanding of the world. Piaget helped change early thinking that kids think like adults. He concluded, “The way children think is fundamentally different from adults.”²⁸ His approach focuses on four distant concepts: schemas, egocentrism, accommodation, and assimilation. Each stage focuses on how children think about themselves, others, and the world. The four stages in Piaget’s theory are: sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage, and formal operational stage. Social Learning Theories of Child Development focus on the role that parent, caregivers, peers, and other social influences impact the development of children, while others are centered on how children learn by observing people around

²⁶ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 90.

²⁷ Cherry, *Explore Child Psychology*, 92.

²⁸ Jean Piaget. *Psychology of the Child* (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 1980), 37.

them. A few examples of these Social Learning Theories of Child Development include attachment theory, social learning theory, and sociocultural theory.

Psychologist Albert Bandura proposed what is known as social learning theory. According to this theory of child development, “children learn new behaviors from observing other people”²⁹. Unlike behavioral theories, Bandura believed, “eternal reinforcement was not the only way that people learned new things, instead, intrinsic reinforcements such as a sense of pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment could also lead to learning.”³⁰ Bandura’s social learning theory combines elements of behavioral theories as well as cognitive theories while accounting for the influences that social experiences have on how kids learn and grow. Bandura believed that behavioral processes alone could not account for how kids learn. He noted, “observation and modeling play a major part in the learning process.”³¹ In his famous Bobo doll experiment, Bandura demonstrated that kids could learn aggression by watching the actions of an adult model. Robert Cole suggest, “observational learning can involve directly observing another person, but it can also take place by listening to someone else explain how to do something or even reading about it in a book.”³²

There are many different child development theories that have emerged to explain how children learn and grow over the course of childhood. Some of these theories attempt to be all-encompassing and explain many different aspects of the human

²¹⁷ M. C. Daly. *Developing the Whole Child* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 66.

³⁰ Daly, *Developing the Whole Child*, 66.

³¹ Kendra Cherry. *Explore Child Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2018), 50.

³² Robert Cole. *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston, MA: Regal Books, 1990), 14.

experience, which is why they are often called “grand theories.” In other cases, child development theories attempt to explain a narrow aspect of the developmental experience, which is why they are referred to as “mini theories.” In either case, each of these child development theories has helped add to our understanding of how children grow, think, learn, and change over the years from birth until adulthood. These and many different child development theories help to inform my project thesis, “When creative fun is implemented into the Christian curriculum of children, spiritual development increases.” Spiritually educating children, while implementing the fun-factor, creative, fun activities is essential in the spiritual development of children. I propose the expected results of my project will present proof that creative, fun activities are essential in the spiritual development of children.

“When teachers are able to make learning enjoyable, it seems better for both the children and the teacher.”³³ I start from the assumption that children have unique strengths and talents that are difficult to act upon successfully unless an atmosphere of fun is created, because it is just the nature of children to have fun. As I reflect on my own growing up, I realize the extent my first spiritual experiences have remained the basis for my more developed experiences. I also realize how significant the fun moments; the creative fun events were in helping me to develop spiritually.

Laurence Scheindlin suggest, “Spirituality is an act of reaching beyond the self,”³⁴ and argues that “it is self-evident that one of our jobs in attempting to develop spiritual

³³ George Graham. *Teaching Children Physical Education* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics), 2008.

³⁴ Laurence Scheindlin. "Preparing Children for Spirituality," *Religious Education*. 1999, 94:2, 189-200, DOI: 10.1080/0034408990940205.

growth in our children is to attempt it in an interpersonal, fun way.”³⁵ Mildred Parten focused on social play and its development. Suggesting, “The ability to join groups of other children, and the desire to do so begins, at an early age and progresses through a developmental sequence of fun.”³⁶ Parten focused on the different types of social play. In her research she discovered, “children of different ages actually played together differently.”³⁷ They were capable of different levels of categories of social play. Her categories of social play are still a useful tool in helping us focus on how social play changes and develops at different stages of a child’s life. The stages identified by Parten are not always followed in a linear way. In other words, a child may not progress directly from one stage to another, or a child will often engage in different stages of social play depending on factors such as the child’s familiarity with either the situation or their ‘playmates’ or child’s temperament.

There are several different theorists who are associated with child development and they have valid views that could be useful to consider. For instance, Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory relates to both cognitive and social development. This Russian theorist died in 1934; however, his theory was developed around the same time as Jean Piaget. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of relationships and interactions between children and more knowledgeable peers and adults. Vygotsky believed, “children’s cognitive understandings were enriched when they were ‘scaffolded’ by parent, teachers

³⁵ Scheindlin, "Preparing Children for Spirituality, 192.

³⁶ Mildred Parten. "A Basic Introduction to Child Development Theories," *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services*, 2002, 12.

³⁷ Parten, "A Basic Introduction to Child Development Theories," 12.

or peers”³⁸ Vygotsky also believed that the environment plays an important role in a child’s development, particularly in the social aspects of development. He believed, “children internalize feelings and emotions, and that language is a key factor in the development of concepts.”³⁹

There are several theorists who are linked with social development. In addition to Erik Erikson, John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, and Uri Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory and emphasized a balance between nature (heredity) and nurture (environment).

Bronfenbrenner depicts the child as surrounded by four concentric circles, each representing a different set of factors that influence the child. The four concentric circles are: “Micro System, which represents the child’s immediate surroundings.”⁴⁰ “Meso System, which represents the broader surroundings and influences on the child’s development,”⁴¹ and “Exo Systems, which is a broader circle of people who indirectly influence the child.”⁴² Things in the Exo System include the parent’s workplace, the services available to the family and the support networks they are involved in. According to Centre for Learning Innovations, “Macro System is an even broader system that includes the values, customs and attitudes of the cultural group the child belongs to.”⁴³

³⁸ Nixon D. Gould. *Emerging: Child Development in the First Three Years*, 2:1, (Katoomba, AUS: Social Science Press, 1999), 22.

³⁹ Parten, "A Basic Introduction to Child Development Theories," 16.

⁴⁰ Parten, "A Basic Introduction to Child Development Theories," 12.

⁴¹ Parten, "A Basic Introduction to Child Development Theories," 12.

⁴² Parten, "A Basic Introduction to Child Development Theories," 13.

⁴³ Sara Smilansky. *The Construction of Reality in the Child* (Halethorpe, MD: Ballantine Books, 1971), 17.

Social play promotes both mental and social abilities in a child, and Piaget, Vygotsky and other theorists have all made contributions in this area. Jean Piaget and Sara Smilansky developed categories of play, as follow: *Sensory Motor Play*, “here an infant up to two years of age will use various senses and motor skills to explore objects and their environment.”⁴⁴ *Games with Rules*, “In this stage, children are able to follow rules of games and change their understanding of the purpose of rules.”⁴⁵ On the other hand, Sara Smilansky developed three stages of play and based her work with Piaget’s, but expanded it to include: *Functional Play*, “which occurs in the first two years of a child’s life, infants explore objects using their body, (sucking and touching) and progress to other physical activities such as throwing.”⁴⁶ *Constructive Play*, “occurs when a child begins to manipulate materials to create objects and patterns, which is the child’s attempt to work with the materials to produce an effect.”⁴⁷ *Dramatic Play*, “occurs when children imitate the world around them through their role play; this leads to cooperative dramatic play around agreed-upon themes.”⁴⁸

Finally, Jerome Singer highlights the importance of children’s imagination and curiosity developed through dramatic and socio-dramatic play. Singer describes, “the ability to engage in make-believe play as essential to children’s developing ability for internal imagery, stimulating curiosity, and experimenting with alternative responses to

⁴⁴ Katie Martin. *Learner Centered Innovation* (San Diego, CA: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2018), 44.

⁴⁵ Smilansky, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*,18.

⁴⁶ S milansky, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*,19.

⁴⁷ Smilansky, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, 20.

⁴⁸ Smilansky, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*,19.

different situations of fun and play.”⁴⁹ Fortunately, “This capacity, practiced in play settings, enhances children’s ability to engage successfully in new situations.”⁵⁰ While Erickson stresses that a person’s personality emerges from the child’s interactions and experiences with significant people, Erickson argues, “this interaction occurs around all the different skills that are developing during the preschool years of a child.”⁵¹ Because according to Erickson, “During the preschool stage we find that children are ready and eager to learn and achieve goals.”⁵²

The Kids for Christ Ministry interacts with children ages seven years old to eleven years old, not children of preschool stage, and we have found that the fun-factor, creative, fun activities implemented into the Christian curriculum of children, is essential to their spiritual development. This theological view is based on the investigation, research and study done for the DMin project at United Theological Seminary.

⁴⁹ Jerome L. Singer. *Imagery in Psychotherapy* (Manhattan, NY: Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1971), 68.

²³⁷ Singer, *Imagery in Psychotherapy*, 67.

⁵¹ Erik Erickson. *Erickson's Psychosocial Development Theory* (New York, NY: Haworth Press, 2012), 68.

⁵² Donald Ratcliff. *Handbook of Children's Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1992), 85.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

To craft the Project Analysis Chapter, the conclusion of the Synergy Chapter and the contents of the Integration Chapter was reviewed. This final chapter shows the final project, documents the results from the research done during the United Theological Seminary DMin program, and discusses the approach taken to gather data. This chapter also address the results of implementing creative fun activities into the educational curriculum of children through storytelling, audio visuals, games, worksheets, and various activities proceeded by interviews and questionnaires. Also, the reason why this approach was chosen will be discussed. Further, a summary of what was learned from this project, along with data collected, and how the hypothesis supports and answers the question of how well the project worked will be explored.

A mixed methods approach to the scientific process was used throughout the treatment portion of this research. Both a qualitative and quantitative research method was used to gain insight concerning the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations provided by participants into why creative fun activities increase spiritual development in children. Qualitative research is most encountered when conducting exploratory research and involves data collection and analysis. Quantitative research on the other hand allows the researcher to draw on the techniques and provide a more subjective analysis. As the name suggests, qualitative research focuses on a subjective methodology within my

research. Further, the dynamic use of the Bible being used to teach The Kids for Christ Ministry and how select characters were illustrated to point children back to Jesus is what will be analyzed throughout this chapter.

This section of research also emphasizes the engagement with biblical literature as a living force in the life of the researcher and the Kids for Christ Ministry. The intentional and immediacy of the Bible in this project means that there is little distance between the researcher, the participants, and the lessons learned concerning the Bible throughout the treatment process. Because of the active role of Holy Scripture in this project, quoted Scripture or idealized characters from the Bible provided insight into the central theme and focus of this project.

The theme is based on children's ministry and the implementation of creative, fun activities into the Christian education of children. The Kids for Christ Ministry, held at United Theological Seminary, located at 4501 Denlinger Road, Dayton, Ohio 45426, vision is to create an atmosphere of fun and excitement, while teaching children how to follow biblical and Godly principles. Documentation of the results of this project shows that spiritual growth increases when creative fun activities are implemented into the Christian education of children.

Ten of the children who participate in The Kids for Christ Ministry were the participants in the research project. The following documentation of the results provides evidence needed to show a successful scientific experiment with a Christ-centered focus. Participant reactions to the materials presented will determine whether the creative fun activities increased their spiritual development accordingly. According to R. Osborne,

“the spiritual development of children involves a progressive adherence to a propositional network of values, and practice of creative fun activities.”¹

However, there is more to spiritual development than play and creative fun activities. It is essential that children are taught God’s Word. We must also allow for critical and affirming expressions from our children while introducing them to Scripture. The Kids for Christ Ministry reflects on God’s Word and appropriately allows critical and affirmative expressions from our children. When children are led and assisted to understand God’s love toward them, then they are able to make right decisions in their future according to Holy Scripture: “train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”² Additionally, this research examines the possibilities of creative fun activities being used as a catalyst to maintain the attention of children who are being taught to develop spiritually.

This exciting research project allows children the ability to put their understanding of God in a different context, as they receive revelation from God. Also, the opportunity for them to share their own experiences become relevant as they developed spiritually and become closer and develop a more intimate relationship with God as they know Him. The documented results of the project required implementation of creative fun activities to provide the evidence needed to successfully determine if creative fun activities are in fact essential in a child’s spiritual development.

¹ R. Osborne, *Talking To Your Children About God*. (New York, NY: Harper Publishing, 1998), 73.

² Proverbs 22:6, NIV.

Children's primary interest in life and in our culture according to R. Osborne, "are fun and play."³ Therefore, the elements of fun and play were necessary to perform this research project. Creative fun activities are used to inform and guide children to learn and to follow biblical principles while developing spiritually. Further, according to John Chapman, "creative fun activities early in a child's life, lead and direct a child's journey, help them to navigate through life and help them to have a more balanced life."⁴

The leadership and guidance our children are given today may affect the emerging generations and consequently impact the emerging church. That is why the use of creative fun is vital in a child's spiritual development. Because fun and play are their culture, it remains the atmosphere in which children best develop. All children are innately spiritual and young children and their spiritual development are of central relevance and importance to who they are, as well as who they will become. Oliver Dewolf, author of *Guiding Youth in Christian Growth*, reminds us that "it is fun and play-based experiences that create a range of opportunities to explore, imagine, investigate and engage, allowing children's spiritual development."⁵

Because children are innately spiritual the ideal of limiting a child's spiritual development to a classroom setting is one of the biggest mistakes spiritual leaders can make. That is why this research project is intentionally performed both inside classroom settings and outside classroom settings. Therefore, the researcher can document any

³ R. Osborne. *Talking To Your Children About God*. (New York, NY: Harper Publishing, 1998), 73.

⁴ Chapman, John. *Planting the Seeds of Learning With Early Education*. Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2012.

⁵ DeWolf, Oliver. *Guiding Youth in Christian Growth*. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1954.

differences in each setting. Whether the implementation of creative fun and play effects learning and spiritual development can be seen while the youth engage in the learning process. According to C. Boyatzis, “fun based learning is also an effective motivation for team-based learning.”⁶ Additionally, team-based learning often causes children to strive to perform at a higher level to earn approval from their teammates. Ten youth from The Kids for Christ Ministry agreed to participate in this research as subjects.

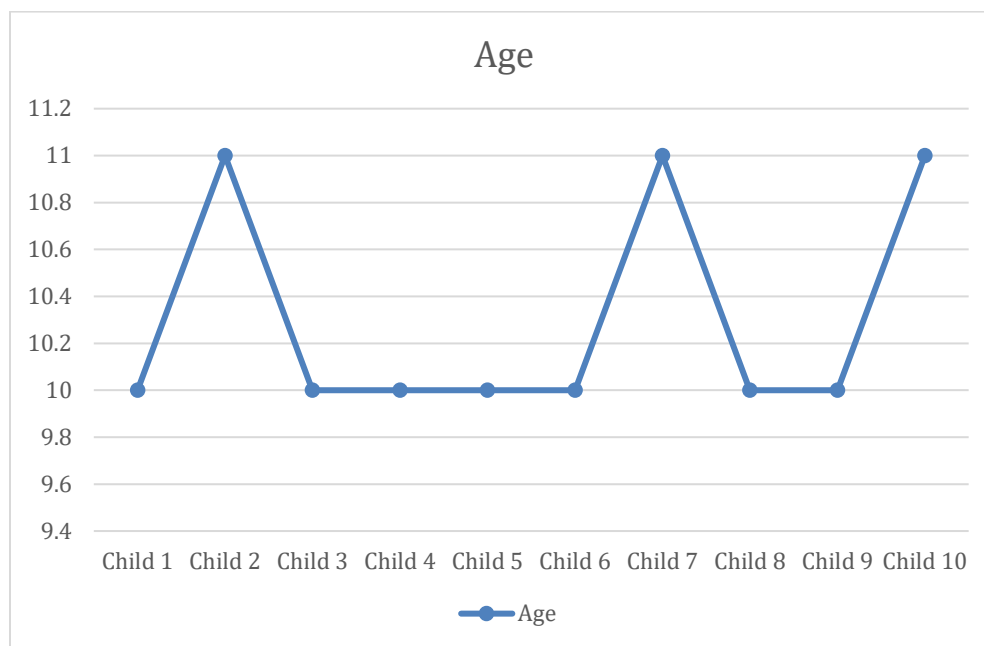


Figure 1

⁶ Boyatzis, C. *Children's Spiritual Development*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2008.

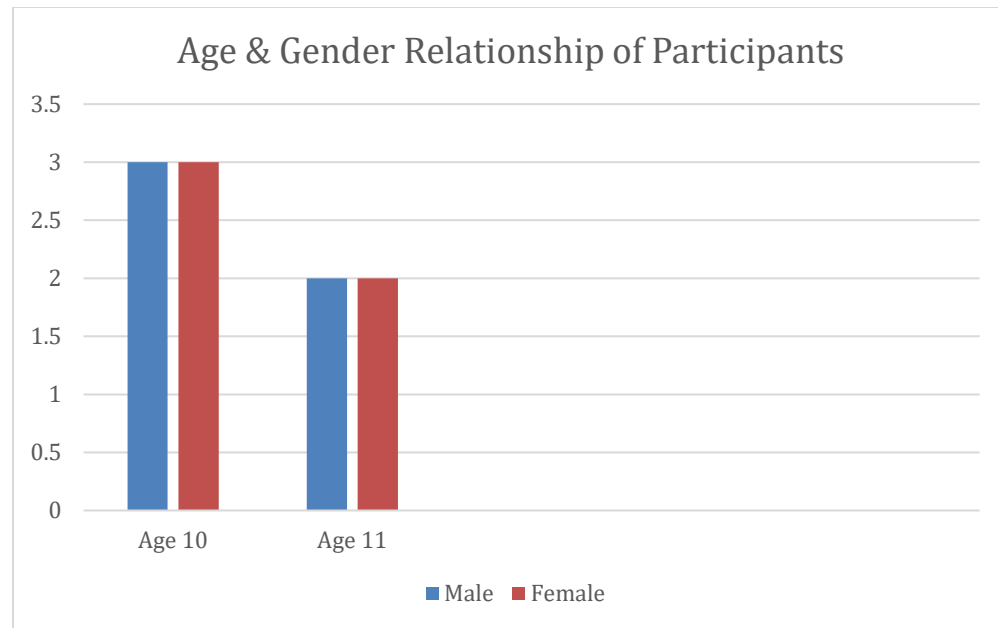


Figure 2

There were ten consecutive weeks of observation and documentation. Each weekly meeting with the youth participants was charted, along with the location of the meeting and whether the meeting was held in a classroom setting or a different location. The ten weeks were observed by three adult participants. All observations were documented and reviewed at the end of each weekly meeting. The results helped determine the effects of creative fun within the test group.

The weekly sessions were held in a traditional classroom setting for approximately an hour, from 5:00-6:00 PM EST. The test results of both meeting types presented evidence that helped determine that creative fun activities increased the spiritual development of each youth participant. Several factors were considered when observing the youth participants, such as, mood, attention span, attitude, posture, facial expressions, engagement, verbal, and body language. The research also measured comprehension and engagement with affirmative expressions, level of excitement,

comprehension of biblical lesson, questionnaire results, and the percentage of correct responses on the assessments.

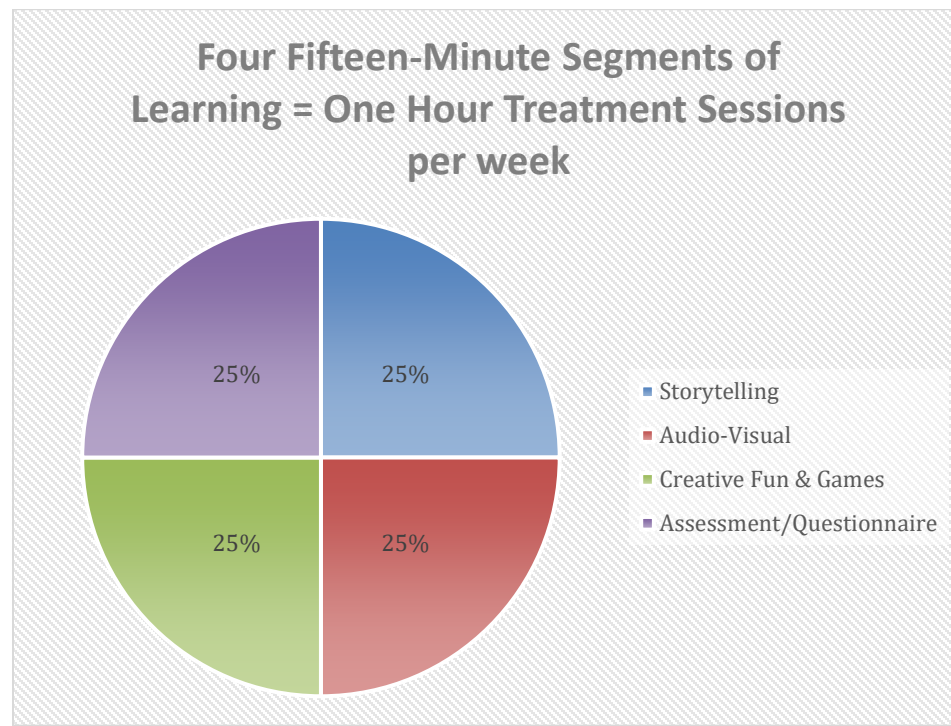


Figure 3

Each lesson was structured in fifteen-minute increments with the following format: scripture reading, prayer, storytelling, audiovisual showing, game/art activity, and an assessment with questionnaire. The story time portion of the lesson is facilitated by the researcher in a traditional classroom with a lecture style communication method. Story time is followed by the audiovisual that compliments the lesson with animation to help bring each Biblical character to life. The animated videos were used to provide an atmosphere which supports the hypothesis; when creative fun is implemented into the Christian education of children, spiritual development increases.

After the animated video was shown, the children were then guided through either a worksheet, game, or creative craft activity that further complimented the Biblical story

and theme that was featured. The constant storytelling and videos are contrasted with related games, worksheets, and art activities that the children are asked to rate their level of enjoyment with each. A short assessment with questionnaire was disbursed at the end of each lesson to measure the effectiveness of each lesson.

Our primary purpose to provide an all-encompassing atmosphere that supports the spiritual development of children and bringing them to an awareness of God, spiritual values, spiritual principles, and their place in our world. The question of whether creative fun and play helps children to develop spiritually was answered after careful monitoring, observation, and documentation of the results of the worksheets along with assessments taken by the youth participants. Additionally, all assessment scores were calculated as a group. Allowing the researcher to have a calculated, rounded off weekly average used for the purpose of the research project. In this way, a weekly average can be documented for the purpose of the research project. Further, note that the research project explores ten weeks of a mixed facilitation method with a constant classroom meeting during the story telling portion of the lesson, and the latter segment of the lesson with a variety of fun and creative activities for the children to critique what they enjoyed most.

Researchers and educators across the world have found that fun and play enrich and enhance learning. Also, fun and play help to develop key skills such as inquiry, expression, experimentation, teamwork, and spiritual and academic development. R. Best argues, “implementation of fun and play create a risk-free, enjoyable environment where children can develop spiritually because they are active participants, instead of passively taking in a lesson in a traditional environment.”⁷

⁷ Best, Robert. *The Whole Child Matters*. Nashville: Life Way Press, 2007.

A child's spirituality is what pulls together the logical and illogical. Fun, creative activities help children develop socially, academically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When we use a fun-based, play-based environment, children are encouraged to participate and engage. Robert Cole reminds us, "when children engage in fun and play it gives them an opportunity to act out and express themselves."⁸

The following pages provides ten weeks of monitoring, documenting, and researching. Whether the meeting was held in an environment of fun and play, or a traditional classroom environment provided evidence needed for the DMin project. Also, the interaction of the children was monitored to determine if the children were engaged socially, academically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Further, the three adult participants, were responsible for recording whether the weekly meeting was held with creative and exciting fun and play or held in a traditional classroom setting during the storytelling portion of learning without creative fun activities. Other behaviors were documented as well. For example, their attention level, comprehension level and over-all behavior. Finally, what was their average test score from each weekly meeting. Again, there were ten youth participants who were observed for ten weeks, by three adult monitors.

The pages ahead provide the data collected each week, along with the average test score calculated for the purpose of the research project.

Eugene C. Kreider, author of *Faith Development in Educational Ministry*, reminds us, "Creative fun activities increase children's ability to see the

⁸ Cole, Robert. *The Spiritual life of Children*. Boston: Regal Books, 1990.

perception of others, increase social confidence, and increase spiritual development”⁹

Let us get started by beginning with week one, held on October 10, 2019.

Week one began with prayer and refreshments. Each week one of the children is responsible for the blessing of food. A volunteer is usually used, however, sometimes a child needs to be appointed. Usually during this time of the meeting children begin to form groups, according to their favorite peer or peers. It is interesting to watch different groups emerge from within the entire test group. Mostly the group is divided into a group of boys and a group of girls. Laughter is in the air and the excitement of engaging with each other is obvious. There is typically a split between the children’s enjoyment between the audio-visual feature presentation and the game/art activity with a small portion of the children indicating their enjoyment of the lecture-styled storytelling facilitation method.

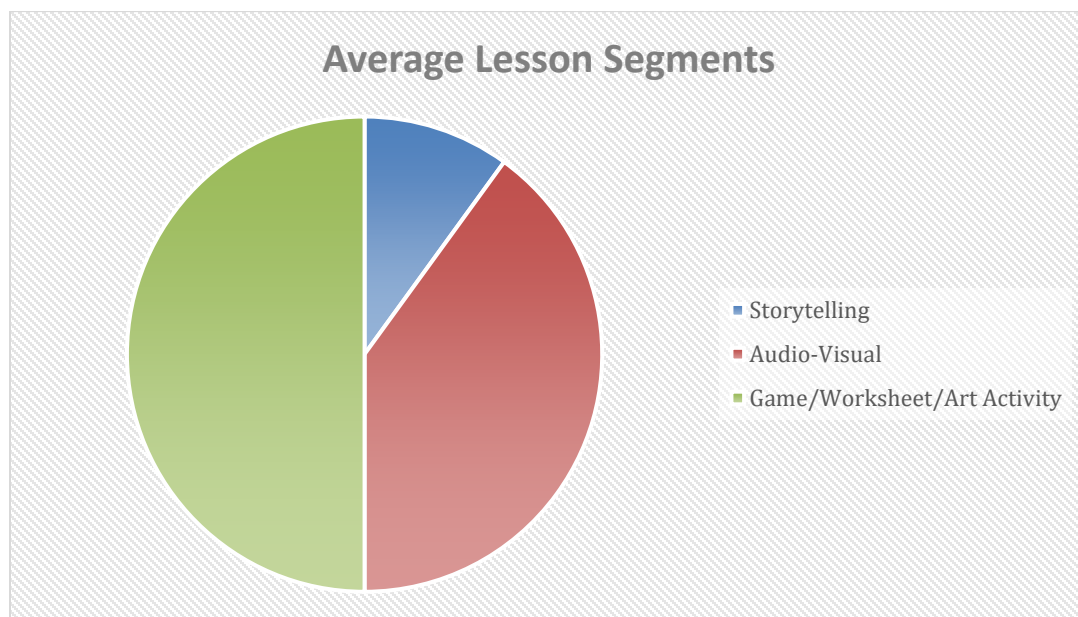


Figure 4

⁹ Kreider, Eugene. *Faith Development in Educational Ministry* (St Paul: & Word & World, 1995), 54.

The children simply gather to share with each other. Usually they share things that have happened at school or the time they spent apart from each other. Also, during this gathering time, prior to the lesson time, if there are any conflicts within the entire group, the conflict usually will show up here. Because this is free time before the lesson begins where the children interact with each other. Week one displayed no conflicts. The meeting was held at United Theological Seminary. The use of a classroom created an atmosphere of traditional learning. The children completed their lunch and it was lesson time. The topic for week one was, Love, the Bible focus was The Creation Story. There was no creative fun activities or games and play. Only a traditional classroom setting and the use of *The Bible for Kids*, published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The traditional classroom environment was accomplished by having the children do a reading assignment. The Bible focus was the topic of love. The reading assignment was Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 2:1-3. After the children completed their reading assignment, the Bible Focus Topic of Love was incorporated into a question-and-answer period. After the question-and-answer period was over, the children prepared for a test involving the information from their Bible lesson. Note, there was no creative fun activity during the storytelling part of the lesson. Only a traditional classroom environment, with a reading assignment was used to introduce the lesson. There was no evidence of enjoyment or excitement from the youth participants during the first part of the lesson. The over-all behavior from the youth participants was anxious and nervous. They were not looking forward to the next part of the learning segment, as they appeared to be very bored. The second half of the lesson, however, was a huge success! The children were

totally engaged in the lesson audiovisual segment along with the special planned creative activity.

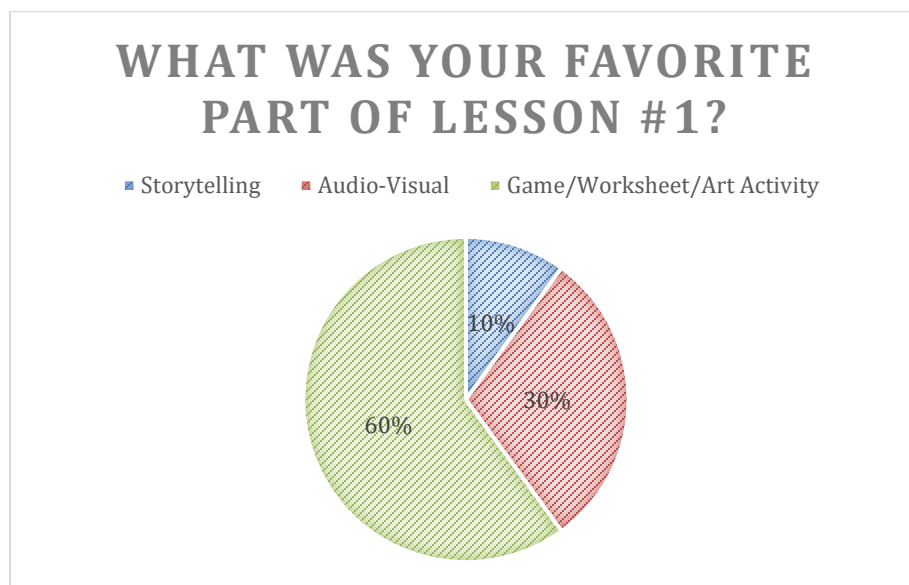


Figure 5

The test was given, based on the entire hour segment, and the youth participants assessment result score was ten percent of the children enjoyed the storytelling portion of the lesson; thirty percent enjoyed the audio-visual segment of the lesson; while, sixty percent enjoyed the creative-fun segment of the learning portion. The results from the first half of the lesson affirmed something was lacking. Why hadn't the youth participants scored higher in the first segment, than the score from the second half of the lesson? This was proof that the comprehension level of the youth participants needed more engaging activities. The fact that most of the children indicated their fun after applying their new knowledge in a creative, fun activity increased their test scores shows an expressed link between the engagement and the fun. It was time to investigate and see if this was an isolated event, or whether these results were truly linked and would be reoccurring.

Week two meeting was held on October 27, 2019. The elements of excitement and creative fun had created the atmosphere Eugene C. Krieder talked about in his book titled, *Faith Development in Educational Ministry*. “Creative, fun activities increase children’s ability to see the perspective of others, increase their social confidence, increase their knowledge, and help them to develop spiritually.”¹⁰ The traditional classroom environment was accomplished by having the children listen in a lecture-style format. The Bible story was King Solomon, and the Bible focus was the topic of wisdom.

There was no evidence of enjoyment or excitement from the youth participants during the first part of the lesson. The over-all behavior from the youth participants was anxious and nervous. They were not looking forward to the next part of the learning segment, as they appeared to be very bored. The second half of the lesson, however, was a huge success! The children were totally engaged in the lesson audiovisual segment with twenty percent of children indicating their enjoyment.

¹⁰ Kreider, Eugene C. *Faith Development in Educational Ministry*. St. Paul: Word & World, 1995.

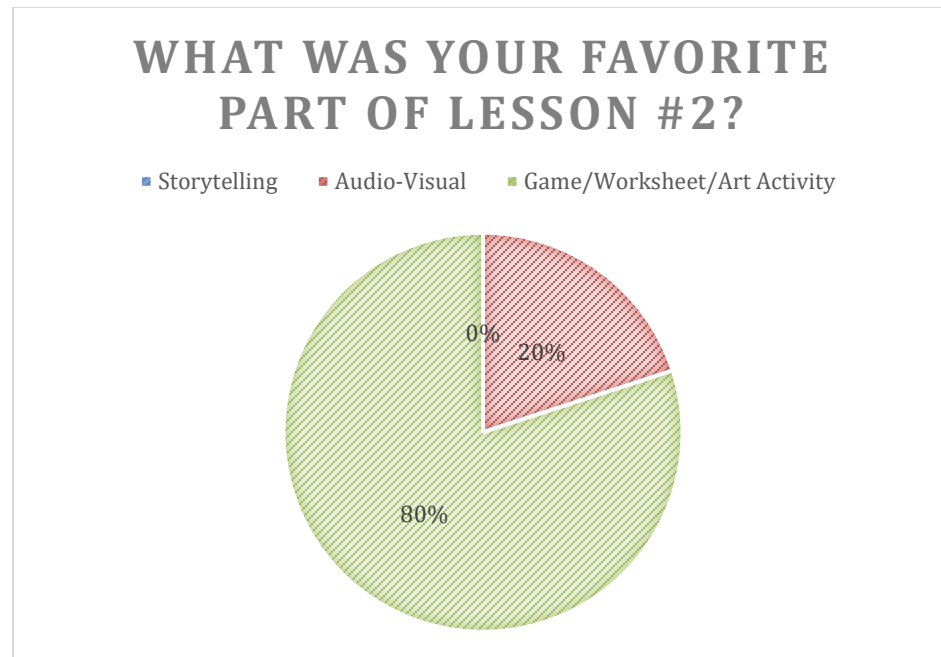


Figure 6

The average calculated test result was eighty percent enjoyment on the creative-fun portion of the lesson. This was evidence that creative, fun had made a difference. But to secure this hypothesis, more evidence was needed. Week three presented an opportunity to gather must needed evidence. However, with the time left, a test needed to be given to the ten youth participants, along with reviewing the notes and documentations made from the three adult observers. The fact that ninety-five percent of the children indicated their fun after watching the video and applying their new knowledge in a creative, fun activity increased their test scores shows an expressed link between the engagement and the fun. To our surprise, the average test result proved to be higher than week one.

Week three of the research was held on November 11, 2019, at United Theological Seminary. Using one of the classrooms we were able to create the traditional classroom setting for the first portion of the lesson. The topic was kindness, the Bible

focus was Ruth & Naomi. Today's lesson plan involved an audio-visual pertaining to the story of Ruth & Naomi, one of the great accounts of love and friendship. The audio visual selected had a narrator who read the story of Ruth 1:1-4. There was no excitement in the story-telling aspect of the lesson where a non-animation audio was shared without bright colors, no exciting characters, just a man reading scripture with a background of him standing in front of a podium.

The youth participants appeared annoyed and bored with the audio. Some even focused on other things. One participant even laid his head down on the desk. The attention of the youth participants was not at the level it should be for learning and retention purposes. The youth participants were distracted, and it was clear that the meeting needed something to gain the interest of the youth participants.

After the audio ended, an animated feature presentation was shown by direct contrast. The children totally engaged the animated characters and were able to transition eagerly into the next portion of the lesson. Activity Worksheets were passed out that provided questions about the story of Ruth and Naomi. After calculating the scores on the worksheets, the results supported the hypothesis of this project. No creative, fun had been implemented during the first half of the meeting, that featured a boring audio of a man reading scripture. It was no surprise the youth participant's calculated average score was seventy percent of their enjoyment (seven out of ten participants). It was on to week four.

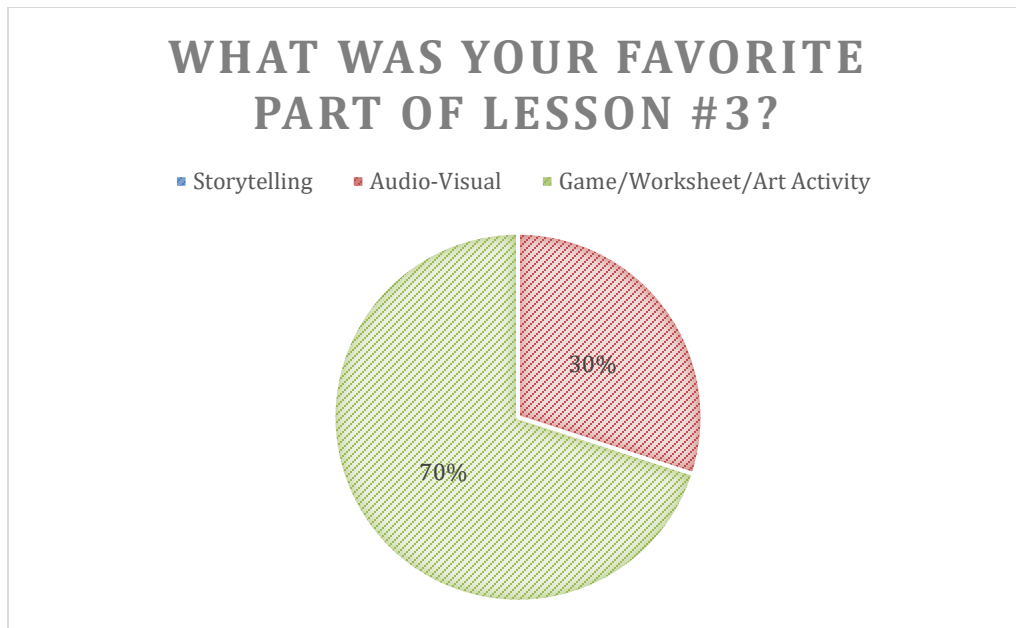


Figure 7

On November 10, 2019, week four was intentionally full of creative fun and excitement. The Bible Focus was the story of Jonah and the topic was forgiveness. The implementation of creative fun was a simple task because in the story of Jonah, God showed great kindness toward both the prophet Jonah, along with the people of Nineveh. Week four, involved creative fun that allowed the youth participants to embrace the importance of forgiveness, specifically as it relates to the story of Jonah. The idea was to pair-up the ten participants and blind-fold one of the participants within the pair. The blind-folded youth participants were led through a maze by their teammate, who was not blind-folded. The participants that were not blind-folded could only use their voice to lead their teammate through the maze. No physical contact was allowed. Only verbal instructions were given.

There was shouting, excitement, laughter, fun and anxiousness as the youth participants, those without blind folds carefully directed their team-mate, who had blindfolds. The youth participants were having the time of their lives, while skillfully

listening for the voice that directed them out of the maze. Week four, provided the children with a game that highlighted the importance of following instruction and forgiving each other if they made a wrong turn in error. The outdoor maze was surrounded by beautiful farmland and farm animals.

The excitement of the children flowed like ripples of water, and before long all the youth participants had successfully followed the voice of their teammate. The children participated and showed tremendous excitement. Their collective determination provided success in the game, as they all exited the maze before the time was up. Their facial expressions suggested they wanted more, more exciting fun. This environment provided the perfect opportunity to teach the lesson of Jonah. It also provided the opportunity to role play and act out the characters in the Biblical narrative. After the lesson and implementation of creative fun, a worksheet was given out to the ten youth participants. To our amazement all ten of the youth participants scored one hundred percent. The youth participants average score for the previous week was sixty- two percent. It was clear creative fun was essential.

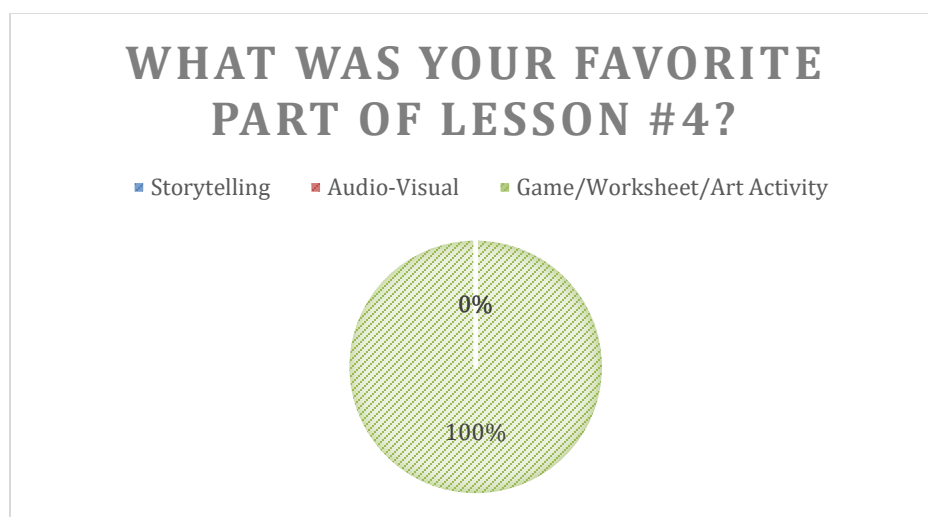


Figure 8

Week five's meeting was held on November 17, 2019, presented no problems and was a week with no creative fun. The topic was obedience and the Bible lesson was Queen Ester. Week five was the traditional classroom environment. Each youth participant set quietly and read the biblical lesson for today's meeting. When the youth participants finished their reading lesson it was time to pass out, the worksheet.

Afterwards a worksheet was handed out and the average score was calculated. With no exciting fun activities during week five, the results of week five reflected poor engagement and lack of retention. In the story of Queen Ester, Queen Vahsti did not obey the command of King Xerxes. This was a concern for the King and the nobles, because they feared Queen Vashti's conduct would become known to all the women and they would be disobedient and despise their husbands. It was important to teach obedience to The Kids for Christ Ministry children, not because they had husbands they would disobey, but because obedience is key in life and critical to success. Even in a traditional classroom setting, obedience is needed to maintain a successful classroom. After all, is not obedience better than sacrifice? This is of great concern to those who engage in the process of learning. The average total score for week five was seventy percent. So, how was it possible to score one hundred percent in a creative, fun environment, and only seventy five percent in a traditional environment?

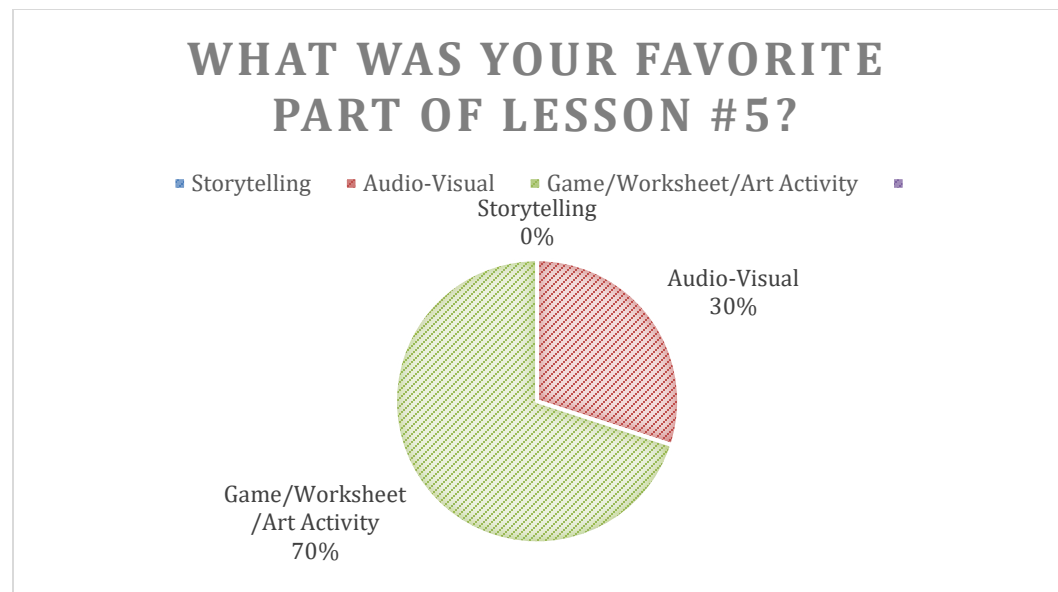


Figure 9

Week six was held on November 24, 2019, the topic was praise, the biblical reference was King David. Week six had an exciting fun activity planned. After their usual lunch and grouping according to gender or favorite peer, the youth participants prepared themselves for a gaming exercise followed by a less exciting lecture-style storytelling segment. The game was heads-up seven-up where the children were able to interact with the information presented them after the storytelling and audio-visual portions of the lesson. We used this opportunity to share the importance of King David's love and adoration to God, and the importance of unity with praise, indicative of the Children of Israel who joined in with David as the Arc of the Covenant returned to the people. It was out of praise to God that David and his lineage were blessed and his legacy be promised with producing the Savior of the world. After observing the excited interaction with the children playing out the different characters: David, the Philistine giant, his friend Jonathan, and his nemesis, King Saul, the questionnaires were passed out and the scores were calculated. Again, with creative fun the youth participants all scored

a higher percent than the audio-visual featured presentation. U. Brofenbrenner reminds us, “Play is far more powerful than adults realize, it’s the key to learning.”¹¹

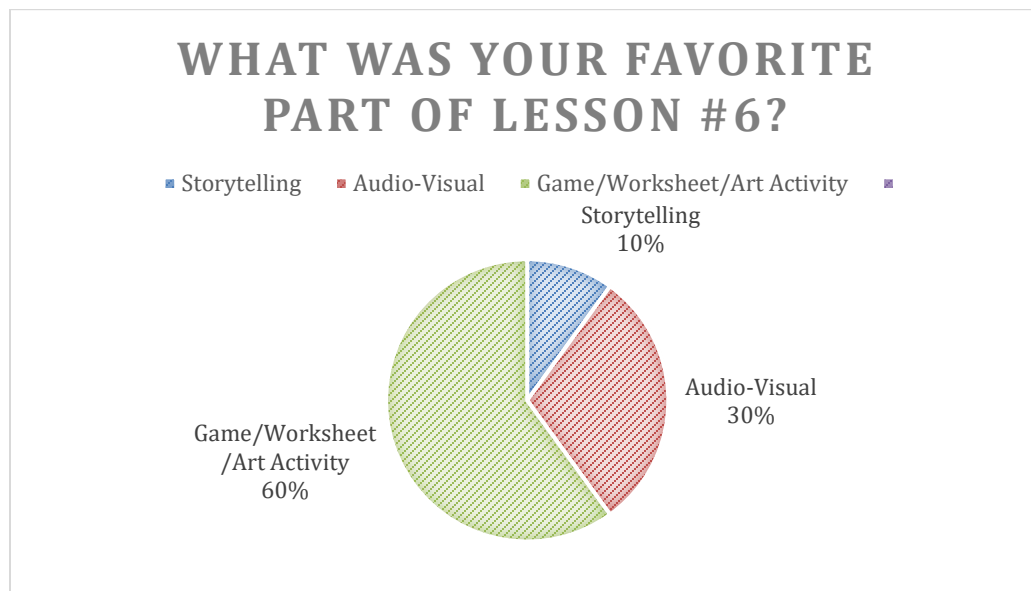


Figure 10

It was on to week seven. Week seven was held on December 1, 2019, at United Theological Seminary. The first part of the lesson was a most quiet environment with no creative fun activities scheduled. The children learned about the Story of Jesus and the topic of The Resurrection in the traditional classroom setting first: complete with desks, chairs, blackboard, erasers, video screen, and pencil sharpener. The storytelling portion of the lesson seemed very monotonous and boring.

It was only when the children were asked to direct their attention to the audio-visual presentation, where the story of the Resurrection was in an animated feature, that the participants seemed interested and their disposition changed. Directly after the video presentation, worksheets were passed out where the children were able to identify Bible

¹¹ Brofenbrenner, U. *Understanding Children*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1992.

characters in a word puzzle. They could work together, and their collaboration seemed to strengthen the engagement throughout the remainder of the lesson.

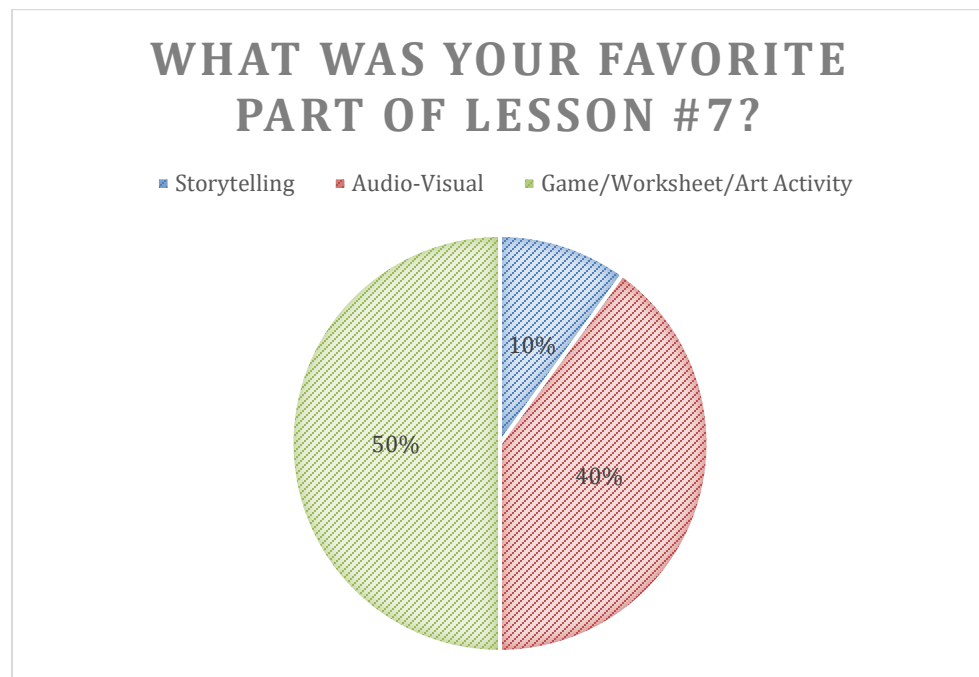


Figure 11

Certainly, there is a distinct pattern that gives evidence to the fact, creative fun activities increase the spiritual development of children. According to the calculated scores, the youth participants score higher when engaged in creative fun activities. The fun-factor in this research is defined as, a pleasant, enjoyable element or cause that contributes to a result of happiness and joy. It is evident that the fun-factor is the element needed to achieve the higher scores. However, let's continue to week eight.

Week eight, December 8, 2019 started much like all the other lessons previously, where the storytelling segment was first, and then the children were able to apply what they learned and channel their energy into fun and creative ways. This week, however, was a little different, because we were graced with a special guest storyteller instead of

myself. Although I had my PowerPoint presentation slides to help with the transition of content, the presenter and audible storyteller was none other than Dr. Eddie Heard.

Dr. Eddie Heard was the speaker for the day and served as the director of an organization called Youth Transforming Youth. There was nothing exciting about Dr. Heard, or the casual way he spoke. He was perfect to use for this research project. Dr. Heard shared the story of Joshua and the importance of being strong, courageous, and successful. He also shared Joshua's words of prosperity and success. Telling the youth participants about the commands of Joshua, not to be afraid, but to pursue righteousness. However, because there were not any exciting fun activities, Dr. Heard struggled with keeping the attention of the youth participants. After his speech, worksheets were passed out, scores were calculated, and the group average score was seventy two percent. R. Osborne suggest, "The spiritual development of children involves a progressive adherence to a propositional network of values, creeds, and practices of creative fun."¹²

Week eight presented a great opportunity to further develop the knowledge of the children as it related to the story of Joshua and the topic of faith. The challenge was combining fun with the topic of faith. The answer was quickly revealed: we would allow each student an opportunity to make a basketball shot for each question the answered correctly regarding a different aspect of faith. It came to no surprise that the children wanted to answer questions pertaining to the lesson that was shared.

The storytelling segment of the lesson was often repeated as the children were asking me to remind them of how God ordained Joshua after the prophet Moses died, and the many battles that Joshua fought and won! The children were able to answer the

¹² Osborne, R. *Talking To Your Children About God*. New York: Harper Publishing, 1998.

questions successfully, while having fun. Ninety percent of the questions were answered correctly. Supporting and given evidence that the fun-factor is essential to the spiritual growth of children.

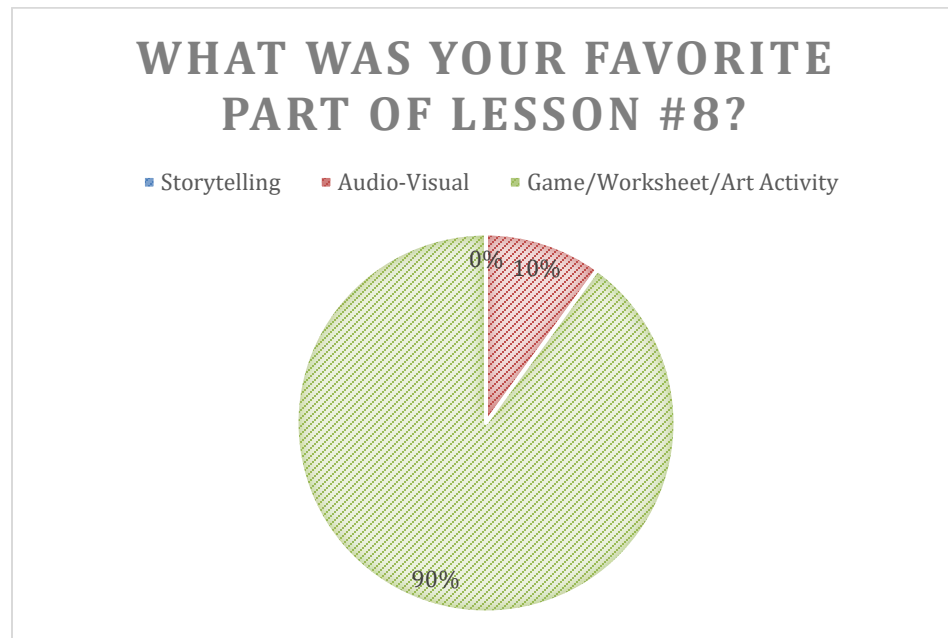


Figure 12

Week nine happened on December 15, 2019. The typical classroom environment afforded me to facilitate a lecture-styled approach to the story of Samson with particular focus on the topic of strength. Immediately after the storytelling segment, an animated audio-video was shown to the youth participants. The story of Sampson and how he lost his strength was portrayed by colorful characters with action-hero type qualities that kept the children captivated.

With the Biblical topic being strength, the children paid particular interest of the story of Sampson when they found out that the source of his strength was his hair. Also, how Sampson lost his strength became a topic of discussion among the youth. As the lesson progressed, the children were able to play a game of in-door tug-of-war with five children on one side, and five on the other to demonstrate the great strength of Samson.

At the end of the meeting, worksheets were passed out and the average calculated score for the group was one hundred percent.

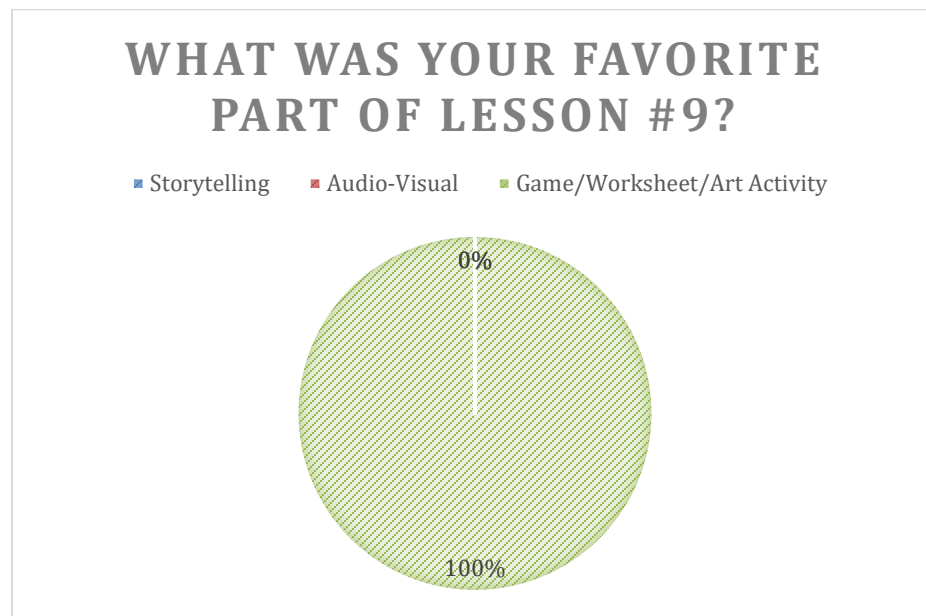


Figure 13

We came to the end of the ten-week research project on December 22, 2019. Week ten was not only our last week for gathering data for the research project, but it was also a week of fun and excitement for the youth participants. The date was December 22, 2019, the topic for the day was prayer with the story of Daniel as the biblical focus. The book of Daniel revealed deep and hidden things, praises to God and shared how God gave wisdom to the wise and gave knowledge to the discerning. Also, Daniel was a man that prayed continually and interpreted dreams.

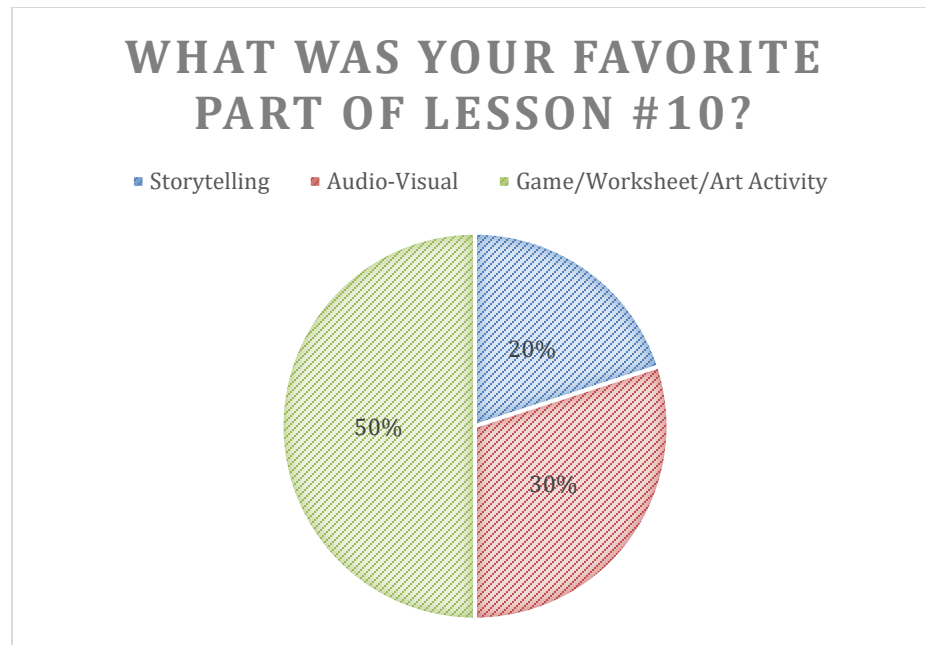


Figure 14

The Kids for Christ Ministry had arranged for a treasure hunt. All the treasures had different prizes, hidden in different places, hidden throughout the landscape at United Theological Seminary. This provided the youth participants an opportunity to run, jump, chase each other, and play, as they searched for the hidden treasures. To our surprise, they found them all. More importantly, the joy and fun the youth had while searching for the treasures was explosive. Each treasure had clues related to Daniel and the importance of prayer. Clues that would help them answer the worksheet correctly. The youth participants answered the questions with an average calculated score of ninety eight percent. Confirming, creative, fun activities increase the spiritual development of youth.

The following results are evidence collected from the ten-week research project: After ten weeks of research, the evidence concludes that when creative, fun activities are implemented into the course of study, the child participants render a higher percentage of engagement and retention, as opposed to the traditional less creative and fun activities

that expound on the same information. This research concludes that children, ages ten and eleven years old with an even mix of male and female participants, enjoyed gaming, creative activities, and worksheets 70% more; enjoyed the audio-visual animated feature presentations on average of 20%; and rated the traditional classroom lecture-styled storytelling aspect of communication only 10% of the time spent learning about the Bible.

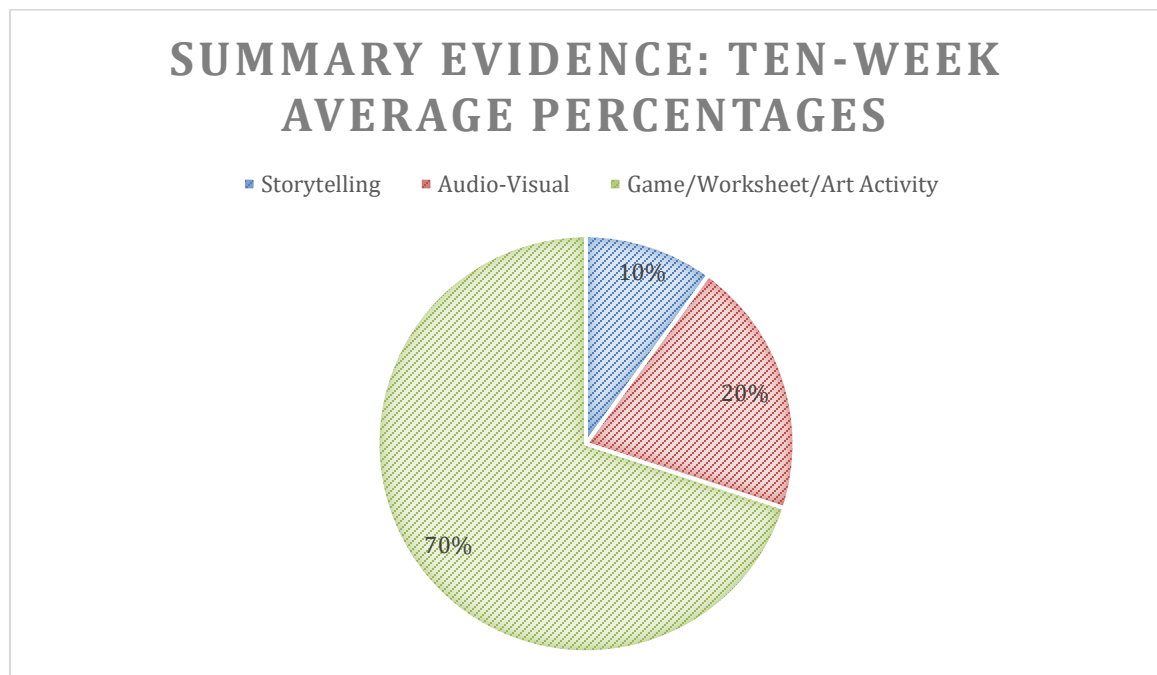


Figure 15

The Bible focus topics were used throughout the testing phase of the project ranging from Love, Wisdom, and Kindness, to Forgiveness, Obedience, Praise, and Faith, to list a few. Learning sessions consisted of the incorporation of oral storytelling, activity worksheets, and audio-visual (A.V.) tools to help with the retention effort. Effectiveness will be measured by the completion of each assigned activity, and the willingness to submit without a lot of coercion.

Because our children are growing up in an entertainment drenched culture with new media technologies and high production values, this constitutes the need for us to learn to speak a different language and form a different approach. This research points to these interests as an essential aspect of formulating lasting change within the hearts and minds of developing children.

This research also brings into focus the various opportunities to explore this phenomenon with more questions to the children to include: what area of the lesson did you enjoy more—the Bible Focus Story (Bible characters), or the Bible Topic (Biblical themes)? Another unexplored opportunity is whether the storytelling portion of the traditional lecture-styled portion of the learning may have been received enjoyed more, or received differently, if other presenters were summoned to bring a different perspective to the classroom setting. One last aspect of this project that if explored may render different results, is whether the age of the participants would have created a different outcome given the same variables: lecture-storytelling, audio-visuals, and creative activities with games.

If another researcher takes this study further, they may find that the older the participant, the more engaged they are with the lecture-style or even a discussion group aspect of engagement may need to be introduced for a more productive synopsis. Nevertheless, I have learned a great deal about the various styles associated with facilitation in the classroom setting and have grown both personally and professionally. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn more about the God I serve through the mission of Christian education. My convictions are even greater, as my faith has been

renewed with fresh perspective of tactical methods to disciple youth in the Twenty-First Century.

APPENDIX A

WEEK 1: THE CREATION STORY

The Creation Story

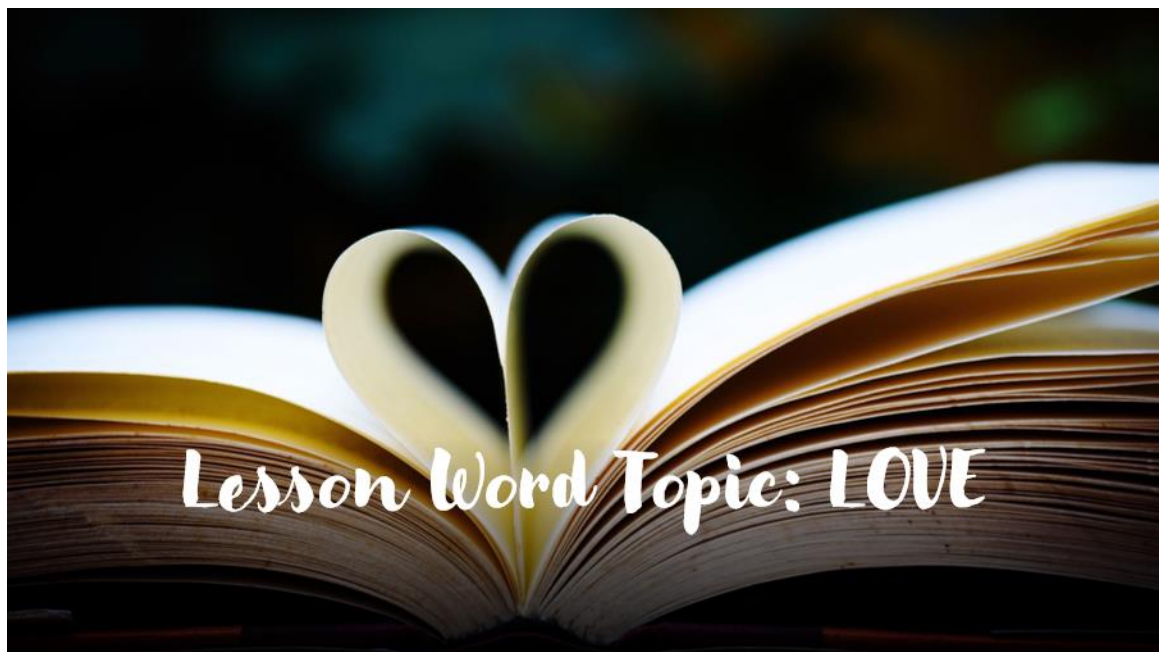
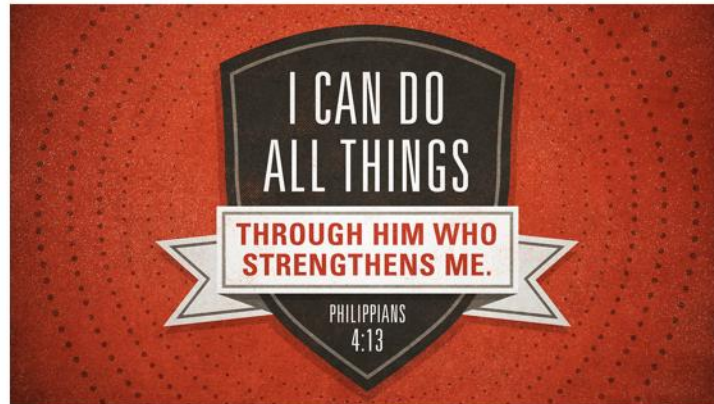
Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

Learning Session: I

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Love
- Bible Focus: The Creation Story
- Worksheet Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



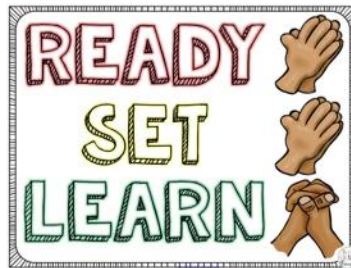
Scripture & Prayer



The Father's Love & The Creation Story

- John 3:16: *For God So Loved the World that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*
- 1 John 4:7-8: *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
- Genesis 1:1-5: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*

Worksheet Handout



Audio Visual Presentations

- The Creation Story Video:
• <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA7wQT4AdKs>
- The Word of the Day: LOVE video:
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA5_oVhI9yE



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX B

WEEK 2: KING SOLOMON



King Solomon

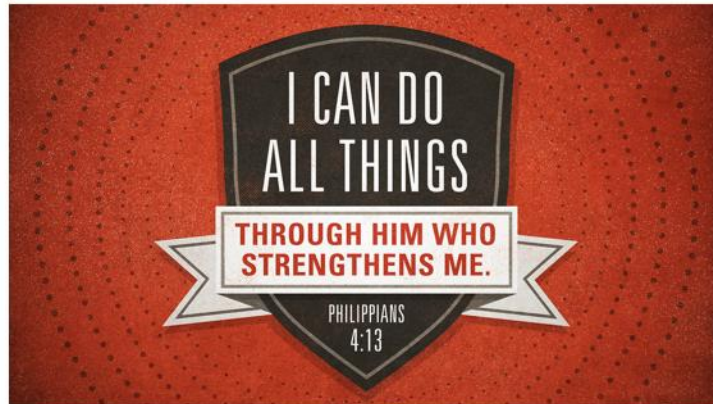
Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

Learning Session: 2

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Wisdom
- Bible Focus: King Solomon
- Art Activity Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



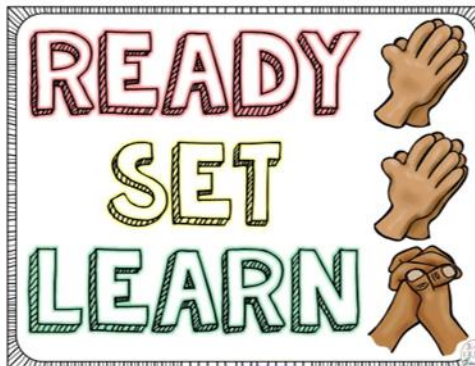
Lesson Word Topic: Wisdom



Wisdom & King Solomon

- Psalm 90:12: *Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*
- Psalm 111:10: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.*
- Psalm 37:30: *The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.*
- 1 Kings 4:29–30: *God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.*
- 1 Kings 10:23–24: *King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.*

Art Activity



Audio Visual Presentations

- King Solomon Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1gt3vRkP6I>
- The Word of the Day: Wisdom video:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cat6V4dPs_wA&t=12s



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX C

WEEK 3: RUTH & NAOMI

Ruth & Naomi

Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

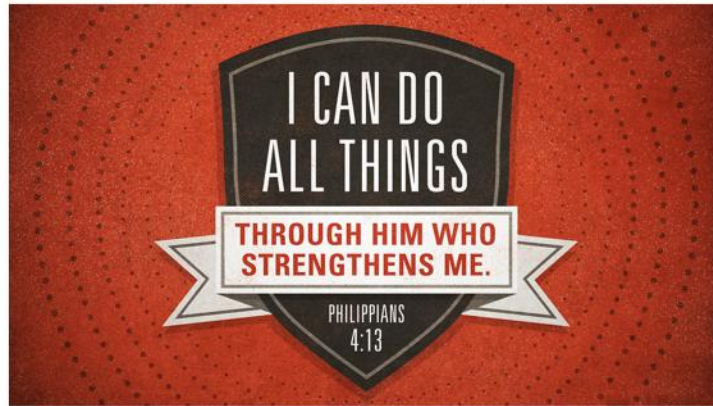


Learning Session: 3

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Kindness
- Bible Focus: Ruth & Naomi
- Game
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



Lesson Word Topic: Kindness



Kindness: Ruth & Naomi

- Galatians 5:22: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
- Colossians 3:12: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*
- Isaiah 63:7: *I will tell of the kindness of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes; the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses*
- Ruth 1:16–18: *But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.*

Game Time!



Audio Visual Presentations

- Ruth & Naomi Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmoHdIEu8Jw>
- The Word of the Day: Kindness video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FTiWQ9Ihnw>



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX D

WEEK 4: JONAH



Jonah

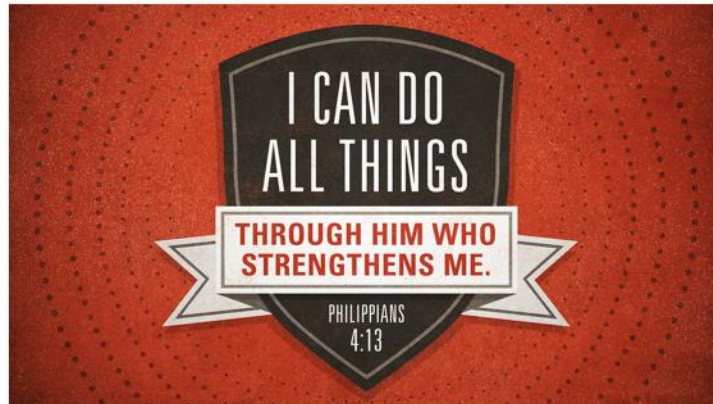
Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

Learning Session: 4

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Forgiveness
- Bible Focus: Jonah and the Whale
- Worksheet Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



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Lesson Word Topic: Forgiveness



Best Way to Say Sorry

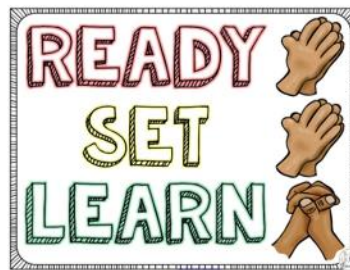
1. I'm sorry for...
2. This is wrong because...
3. In the future, I will...
4. Will you forgive me?

Forgive others
as quickly as
you expect
God to forgive you.

Forgiveness & The Story of Jonah

- Psalm 32:1: *Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven; whose sins are covered.*
- Acts 2:38: *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
- Acts 13:38: *"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."*
- Jonah 1:1-3: *The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed to Tarshish to flee from the Lord.*
- Jonah 1:17; 2:1; 2:10; and 3:3: *Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh.*

Worksheet Handout



Audio Visual Presentations

- The Story of Jonah Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uffMjgYhvlM>
- The Word of the Day: FORGIVENESS video:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cG_WLYUN_Hw



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX D

WEEK 5: QUEEN ESTHER

Queen Esther

Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

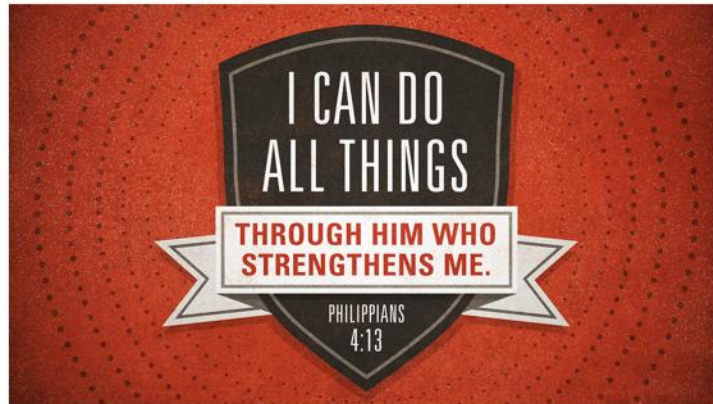


Learning Session: 5

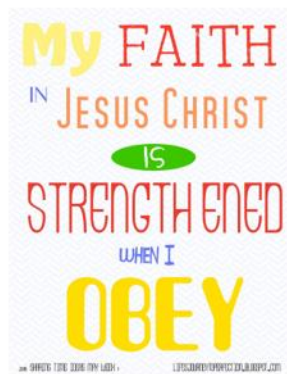
- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Obedience
- Bible Focus: Queen Esther
- Art Activity Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



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OBEDIENCE
IS EASY
IF WE KNOW
HOW TO
LISTEN
IF YOU LOVE ME,
YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.
JOHN 14:15 (ESV)

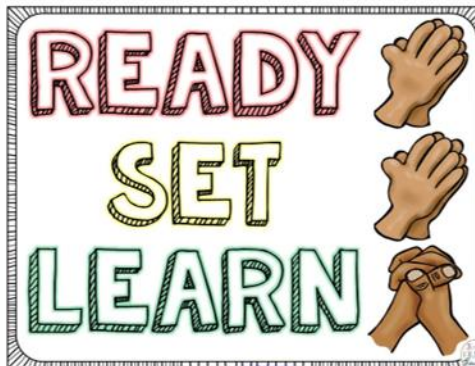


Lesson Word Topic: Obedience

Obedience & Queen Esther

- Deuteronomy 28:1: *If you fully **obey** the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands, I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.*
- Job 36:11: *If they **obey** and serve Him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.*
- Ephesians 6:1: *Children, **obey** your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*
- Esther 2:15: *And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her.*
- Esther 4:15-16: *Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."*

Art Activity



Audio Visual Presentations

- Queen Esther Video:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lesvJS7_ZNo
- The Word of the Day: Obedience video:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_4ne_XTe3I



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX D

WEEK 6: KING DAVID

King David

Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

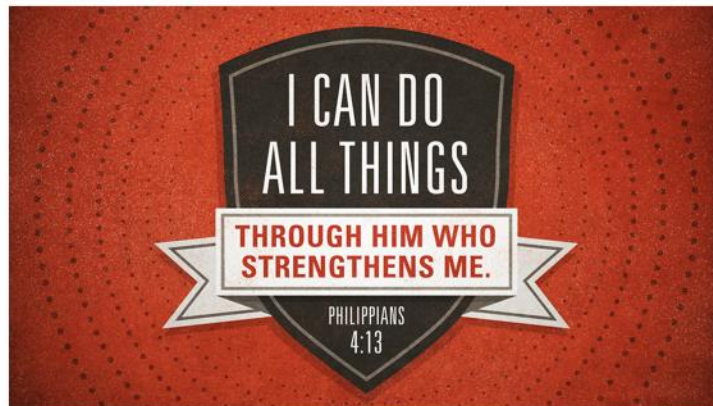


Learning Session: 3

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Praise
- Bible Focus: King David
- Game
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



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Lesson Word Topic: Praise

Praise & King David

- Deuteronomy 32:3: *I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!*
- 2 Samuel 22:1: *David sang to the Lord the words of this (Praise) song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.*
- 2 Samuel 22:4; 22:47: *"I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and have been saved from my enemies. The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted by my God, the Rock, my Savior!"*
- 1 Samuel 17:32: *David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him!"*
- 1 Samuel 17:34-36: *But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God."*

Game Time!



Audio Visual Presentations

- King David Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83Gi0sCD42M>
- The Word of the Day: Praise video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwUpFo9Qow4>



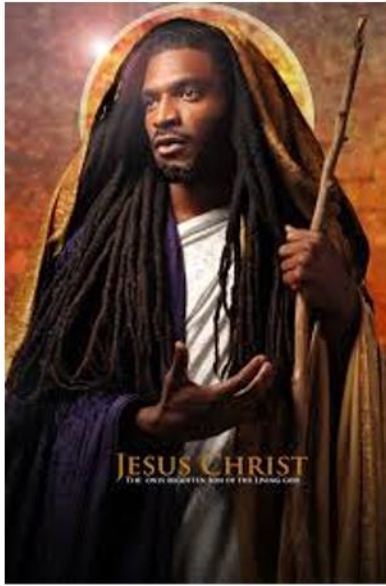
Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX D

WEEK 7: JESUS & THE RESURRECTION



Jesus & The Resurrection

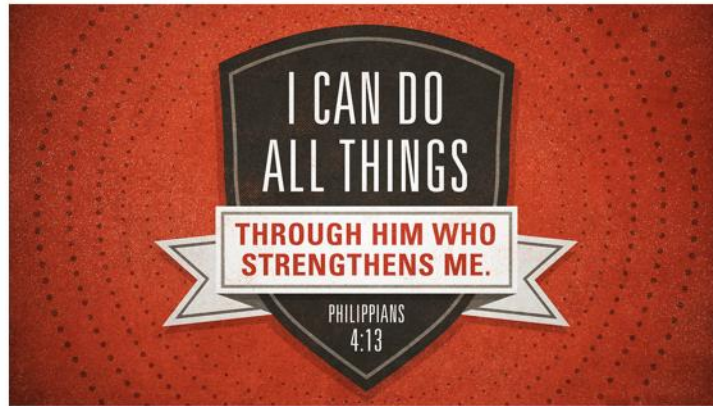
Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

Learning Session: 7

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Jesus
- Bible Focus: The Resurrection
- Worksheet Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



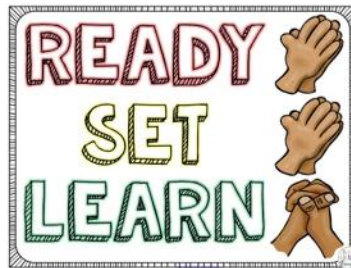
Lesson Word Topic: Jesus



Jesus & The Resurrection

- Isaiah 9:6-7: *For to us a child is born (JESUS), to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*
- Isaiah 42:1-4: *Here is my servant (JESUS), whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope."*
- John 14:6: *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
- John 11:25: *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."*
- 1 Peter 1:3: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Worksheet Handout



Audio Visual Presentations

- The Story of Jesus the Messiah Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pdu08>
- The Word of the Day: The Resurrection video:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x50_LaIgWfE

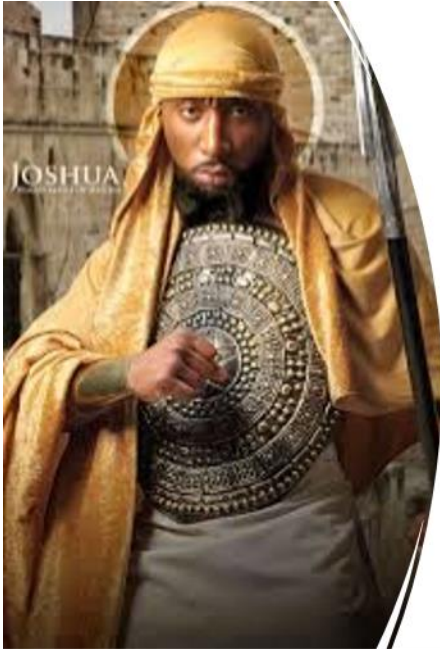


Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX D**WEEK 8: JOSHUA**



The Story of Joshua

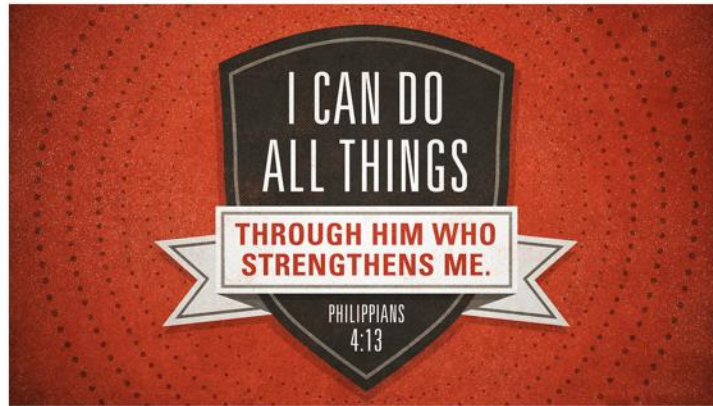
Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

Learning Session: 8

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Faith
- Bible Focus: Joshua
- Art Activity Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



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Lesson Word Topic: Faith

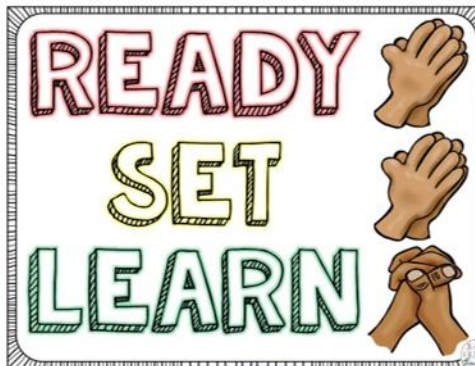
Faith IS NOT KNOWING
WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS,
BUT KNOWING
who holds the future.

article of faith **seek** true
We Believe
lovely good report hope
chaste honest benevolent
e true honest virtuous **chaste**
endure lovely seek
praiseworthy 13th

Faith & The Story of Joshua

- Hebrews 11:1-3: *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*
- Hebrews 11:6: *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*
- Numbers 27:18: *So, the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him."*
- Deuteronomy 31:23: *The Lord gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you."*

Art Activity



Audio Visual Presentations

- The Story of Joshua Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rugGz1480uc>
- The Word of the Day: Faith video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLz8OnlvN4w>



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX D

WEEK 9: SAMSON



The Story of Samson

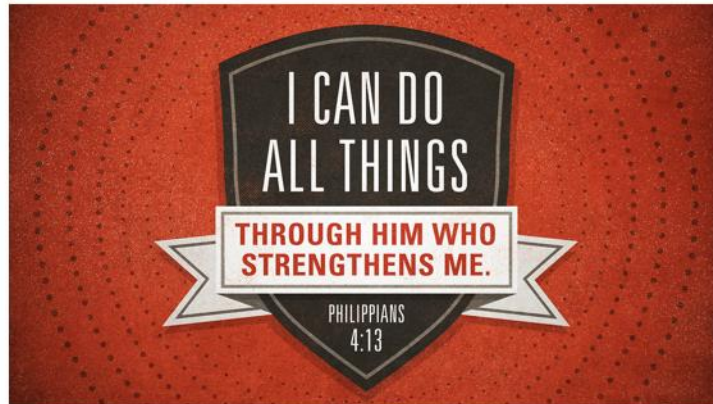
Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

Learning Session: 9

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Strength
- Bible Focus: Samson
- Game
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



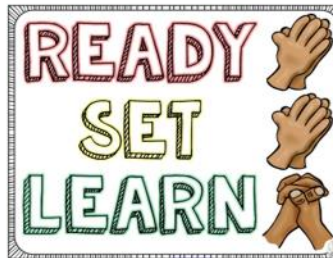
Lesson Word Topic: Strength



Strength & The Story of Samson

- 1 Samuel 30:6: *David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God.*
- 1 Chronicles 16:27: *Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and joy are in his dwelling place.*
- 1 Chronicles 29:12: *Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.*
- Judges 16:6: *So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued."*
- Judges 16:17: *So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, by strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."*
- Judges 16:28: *Then Samson prayed to the lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes."*

Game Time!



Audio Visual Presentations

- Samson Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHOp8rqAb7Q>
- The Word of the Day: Strength video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPXuVV4orUk>



Dismissal Prayer

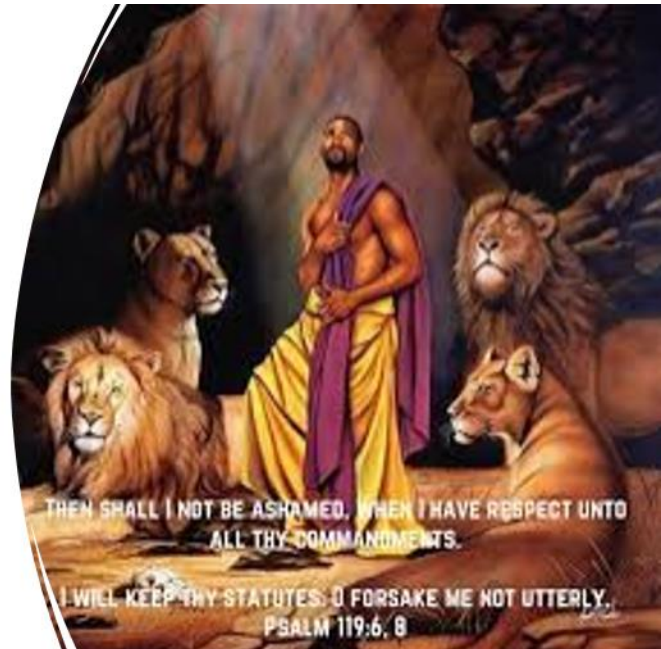
- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



APPENDIX E**WEEK 10: DANIEL & PRAYER**

Prayer & The Story of Daniel

Story by: Pastor Carolyn D. Banks

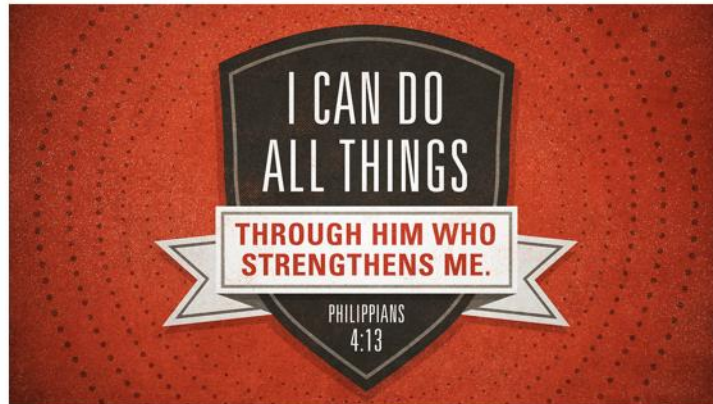


Learning Session: 10

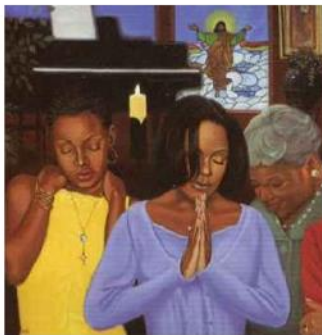
- Prayer
- Scripture
- Topic: Prayer
- Bible Focus: The Story of Daniel
- Worksheet Distribution
- Audio Visual Presentation
- Question & Answer Period: Lesson Retention Assessment
- Dismissal Prayer



Scripture & Prayer



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Lesson Word
Topic:
Prayer

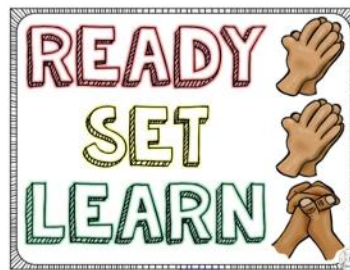
REJOICE ALWAYS;
PRAY
WITHOUT CEASING;
IN EVERYTHING
GIVE THANKS;
FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL
FOR YOU
IN CHRIST JESUS.
1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18



Prayer & The Story of Daniel

- Matthew 26:41: "Watch and *pray* so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 : Rejoice always, *pray* continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- Ephesians 6:18: And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of *prayers* and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on *praying* for all the Lord's people.
- Daniel 1:17: To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And *Daniel* could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.
- Daniel 2:47-48: The king said to *Daniel*, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." Then the king placed *Daniel* in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.
- Daniel 6:10: Now when *Daniel* learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Worksheet Handout



Audio Visual Presentations

- The Story of Daniel Video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWC9uSqDmzII>
- The Word of the Day: Prayer video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhyvL0QFKHc>



Dismissal Prayer

- Thank you for participating! You are welcome to a snack (light refreshments for both children and their parents). We hope to see you next week for more fun!



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